

# Living Well with Dementia

## Caregiver Tips on Anger & Aggression



### What could be causing this behavior?

- Overreacting emotionally is common for an individual living with dementia because their thinking capability is limited. This can cause feelings of being overwhelmed, anxious and frustrated in many different situations.
- “Adverse Reactions” describes the behaviors that may seem a bit exaggerated or inappropriate for the situation. However, these can be prevented, reduced and best managed if they are addressed before they happen.

### Common causes of adverse reactions:

- Having to think about multiple things at once (such as the steps needed to do the laundry).
- Trying to complete activities they once enjoyed doing.
- Being rushed.
- Not having the capability to answer questions.
- Not understanding what is being asked.
- Being overtired.
- Not being understood.
- Being treated and spoken to like a child.

Individuals living with dementia can become excessively upset and experience sudden mood changes. It may often appear that the individual is being stubborn.

Symptoms may include crying, anger, agitation, yelling, and striking out at those who are trying to help.

These behaviors are extremely exhausting for the caregiver and the individual living with dementia.

The caregiver should understand and accept that these behaviors are not just the individual being stubborn or mean, but a response that the person living with dementia cannot help.

## How You Can Help

### Reminders (things that help explain what is going on)

- Routines.
- Leaving items that they commonly use in familiar places.
- Leave a reminder note (for those who are still able to read).
- Visual calendar that shows what they will be doing that day.

### Reduce Confusion

- Keep the amount of people in the room to a minimum. This can prevent the individual from feeling overwhelmed and confused.
- Limit the amount of background noise that is present.
- Turn off the television.
- Reduce the amount of clutter in rooms.

### Responding to Behaviors

- If the individual seems to be more irritable than usual, be sure to check for signs of illness or discomfort.
- Discontinue activities and let the individual calm down.
- Don't argue or try to explain things. This could make the reaction worse.
- If you find that you're responding to adverse events with anger and frustration, this is a sign that you are overextended and overwhelmed and may need respite.

**For more information about caregiver tips or program availability through Living Well with Dementia, please contact Easterseals Homemakers & Health Services at 603.335.1770.**