

Living Well with Dementia

Caregiver Tips on Suspicions & Delusions



Common Delusions Associated with Dementia They May Believe:

- Someone has stolen their money.
- Someone has poisoned their food.
- Someone is out to get them.
- Someone else is in or living in their home.
- Someone has stolen a favorite possession.
- Someone who has passed is trying to reach them.
- Their spouse or partner is being unfaithful.

Reactions to the Delusions:

- Refusal to take medications or eat food if they believe it is poisoned.
- Accusing the caregiver, family or friends of stealing their personal belongings or money.
- Talking about visiting a loved one who has already passed.
- Refusal to go to certain places due to fear something may happen to them.

Suspicions and delusions can develop in later stages of dementia. Confusion, memory loss and inability to retain information are factors that contribute to the suspicion and delusions.

It is important to remember that although these suspicions and delusions may not be real, they are very real for the individual experiencing them.

Understanding the behaviors and how the individual feels will help you to respond appropriately and provide support for the individual experiencing the paranoia.

How You Can Help

Responding Appropriately to False Beliefs:

- Don't take offense. Remember that they do not have control over this thought process.
- Remain calm. Body language can cause the individual to become more upset.
- Don't argue or try to convince the individual they are wrong. This can cause them to become more upset and could lead to a adverse reaction.
- Avoid inappropriate reactions such as laughing at the individual or whispering near them.
- Find a solution with the individual by looking for the lost or misplaced item.
- Do not confirm with the individual that you did something that you did not do.
- Use distractions to redirect their attention to something they enjoy.
- If the individual continues to look for a specific item, keep several of them on hand to replace if it becomes lost or misplaced.

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