

Behavior Management

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What is a Person trying to Communicate Through Behavior?

- Experts say that all types of behavior are forms of communication. Behavior problems surface for many reasons. If you can identify the reason for the behavior, you can know better how to handle it.
- Common causes of behavior problems include:
 - Fatigue
 - Medications
 - Frustration
 - Dementia/Alzheimer's/other brain disorders
 - Established behavior patterns
 - Anxiety
 - Depression



What is a Person trying to Communicate Through Behavior?

- Many times, dysfunctional behavior increases at the end of the day as stress builds and the person becomes tired. Pacing and wandering are clues that tension and anxiety are building. Certain stressors can trigger agitated behavior.
- Ignoring agitation behaviors is one of the worst things you can do. Try to discover the problem that is prompting the behavior, and fix the problem if you can.



Common Triggers of Agitation Behavior in Patients with Dementia

- Fatigue- Sudden or frequent changes in environment.
- Response to overwhelming environmental stimuli- Excessive noise, commotion, or people can trigger agitation behavior. Large group activities can be disturbing.
- Excessive demands- Caregivers and family must accept the fact that the dementia patient has lost and continues to lose mental functions. Pushing these patient to improve their capabilities will only cause stress.

Dealing with challenging behavior is never easy. Caring for a patient with dementia, Alzheimer's and other brain disorders poses many problems for caregivers. Keep an open mind and be patient. If one strategy doesn't work, try another.



Dealing with Common Behavior Problems

- Angry/Agitated Behavior
 - Reduce Caffeine intake
 - In severe cases, and as a last resort, medication may be prescribed and administered by family or a nurse to keep a dementia patient calm.
 - Reduce outside noise, clutter, or number of persons in the room. Keep objects and furniture in the same places.
 - Help the confused person by making calendars and clocks available.
 - Familiar objects and photographs may offer a sense of security and remind of pleasant memories.
 - Gentle, soothing music, reading, or walks may help an agitated patient.
 - Do not try to restrain a patient during an outburst.
 - Distract with a snack or an activity.



Dealing with Common Behavior Problems

- Repetitive Phrases and Actions
 - Avoid reminding the patient that he or she just repeated the same phrase or ask the same question. Ignoring the repeated phrase or question may work in some cases.
 - Agitated behavior or pulling at clothing may indicate a need to use the bathroom.
 - Do not discuss plans until immediately prior to the event.
- Paranoia
 - If a dementia patient says money or an object are missing, assist them in locating it. Avoid arguing. Try to learn their favorite hiding spot. Report missing item to office immediately.



Dealing with Common Behavior Problems

- Wandering and Pacing
 - A person who paces constantly may burn off too many calories. Also, pacing may turn into wandering. Provide inviting places for the pacer to sit and relax.
 - Locking a patient in his room or restraining him in a chair is inappropriate. Implement activities and adjust the environment to relieve agitation.
 - Put away items such as coats, purses, or eyeglasses. Some patients with dementia will not wander without taking certain personal articles with them. If they can't find them, they won't leave.
 - Provide for regular exercise and rest to minimize restlessness.
 - Dark-colored mats placed in front of doors may prevent the patient from stepping outside. Black or dark blue areas may look like holes in the ground to a patient with dementia, prompting the person to avoid the area.



Dealing with Common Behavior Problems

- Incontinence
 - Assist patient to bathroom every two hours.
 - Limit fluid intake in the evening before bedtime.
 - Place a commode at the bedside at night.
 - Use signs to indicate which door leads to the bathroom.
- Sleep disturbances or nighttime agitation
 - Make sure the living quarters are safe-put away dangerous items and lock the kitchen door.
 - Try soothing music
 - Keep the curtains closed and shut out darkness.
 - If hallucinations are a problem, keep the room well lit to decrease the shadow effects that can be confusing. Remove shadowy lighting, televisions, dolls, etc.



Dealing with Common Behavior Problems

- Communication
 - Maintain eye contact to help keep attention.
 - Use short, simple sentences.
 - Avoid negative sentences such as “Don’t go outside.” Instead say, “Stay Inside.”
 - Speak slowly and clearly.
 - Encourage the patient to talk about familiar places, interests, and past experiences.
- Adjusting the person’s surroundings or activities can help. Simple, basic interventions can be used to ease agitated behavior.
 - Music therapy- studies have shown that playing calming music can lead to a decrease in agitation.
 - Exercise and movement-Light chair exercises can help to maintain function of limbs and decrease problem behaviors.
 - Socialization- Human interaction is essential for people with Alzheimer’s disease. BUT NO LARGE GROUPS



Behavior Problems Common in Children

- Children misbehave for many reasons. They may be seeking attention or act out because they are lonely or frustrated. They may be scared. There may be conflict with family or caregivers. Since children mirror their parents' behavior, established behavior patterns developed at home will be used wherever they are.
- Adults expect children to do as they are told the first time. However, many children require several requests before they comply. Children will learn there is no reason to comply unless positive reinforcement is provided. Negative consequences following compliance only reinforce noncompliant behavior.



Behavior Problems Common in Children

- Negative consequences may bring about a temporary change in behavior but will not change attitudes. Negative consequences, such as writing sentences 50 times, sitting in time-out, or verbal correction, will worsen the negative attitude that underlies the misbehavior unless negative consequences are combined with positive reinforcement once the child complies.
- As children grow, positive behavior is maintained because the child has developed an internal value system, knowing the difference between right and wrong. In the long run, children behave properly because they want to, not because they are forced. As one grows into adulthood, positive behavior is not maintained through threats of punishment. Adults have learned positive attitudes on which they base their behavior.



Suggestions

- Let the child know when a behavior is not appropriate.
- Stay cool and calm. Don't lecture or embarrass them.
- Sometimes it is appropriate to give a child a choice.
- Help the child learn that even though they are angry, they cannot express their anger by hurting others.