

# Managing Difficult Behavior in Residents With Dementia



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Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia affecting older adults, with over five million Americans affected. As a result, there is a growing number of residents with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia in long-term care facilities.

Alzheimer's/dementia can affect a person's ability to understand information and make his or her needs known. This can result in confusion, irritation, stubbornness, or argumentative and verbally abusive behavior.

It takes a special person to work in a long-term care facility—someone who has patience, respect, and a deep sense of caring. There are rewards in meeting the needs of long-term care residents, but there are also frustrations and challenges to overcome. By following the guidelines below, you can help manage difficult behavior in residents with Alzheimer's/dementia

✓ **Approach with care.**

We all feel uncomfortable when people get too close to us, and the residents in your care are no exception. Individuals with Alzheimer's disease are especially sensitive to nonverbal cues. Respect their needs for personal space. If you are going to touch someone, first tell him what you are going to do. Smile reassuringly and use gentle touch to calm the resident.

✓ **Be aware of your paraverbal communication.**

Paraverbal communication is the tone, volume, rate, and rhythm of your speech. Similar statements can have completely different meanings based on the paraverbals used. Be sure your paraverbal communication is consistent with the message you want to send.

✓ **Call the person by name and introduce yourself.**

Remind the resident of who you are. If you ask the resident to identify you, you may increase her frustration and agitation.

✓ **Keep it short and simple.**

Give directives one step at a time. State what you want the person to do, and show him at the same time. It may take up to 30 seconds for a person with dementia to process the information and respond.

✓ **Don't argue with the resident.**

Try to understand how the person is feeling rather than argue the facts of a situation. Fear and confusion can often affect behavior.

✓ **Be flexible.**

Offer choices when possible and try to remember personal preferences. When you encounter resistance, try to take a different approach.

While these suggestions can't eliminate all difficult behavior, they can go a long way toward calming residents in your care.

## About CPI and Dementia Care Specialists

CPI is the standard-setting provider of behavior management training that equips employees to have an immediate, tangible, and lasting positive impact on the people and organizations they serve. Through a variety of specialized offerings, including Dementia Care Specialists, CPI empowers professionals with practical skills they can apply both in and out of the workplace.

CPI's *Dementia Capable Care* training from Dementia Care Specialists helps therapists and care partners work together more cohesively and consistently to deliver a higher standard of care. By focusing on an individual's remaining abilities, the entire dementia care team gains the skills to improve function, safety, and quality of life—one day at a time.

When this compassionate and respectful approach is embraced and implemented by therapy agencies, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, continuing care retirement communities, hospitals, and home care agencies, dementia clients thrive—rather than just survive.

Learn more about how CPI educates, empowers, and enriches at **[crisisprevention.com](http://crisisprevention.com)** or call **800.558.8976**.