

**Disclaimer:** The tips provided are recommendations to help support responsive behaviour management. However, if behaviours persist, please consult with your care team for further guidance.

*Special thanks to Dr. Yael Goldberg, Clinical Psychologist & Neuropsychologist, for the recommendations below.*

## Here are some tips for family caregivers when delivering personal care:

**Use momentum:** If you know that a person with dementia is resistive to personal care, set up a situation where you build momentum for saying yes to several tasks before introducing a task they typically say no to. That is, ask them to do a minimum of three things that you know they typically agree to, and then introduce the care task as item four. People are less likely to say no to something after they've been saying yes consistently.

**Identify the function of the behaviour:** All behaviours serve a function. The four most common functions are:

- To gain attention
- To escape or avoid a task that is uncomfortable, unpleasant, or distressing
- To gain access to an item (food/toy/activity)
- For sensory-stimulation (e.g. the behaviour itself feels good, or reduces some form of discomfort)

In **Scenario 1 "Personal Care" Video for Nursing Home and Professional Care Workers**, it appears that the function of the verbal behaviour is to escape from personal care. And indeed, we see that it worked in that no care was provided. The person with dementia was verbally aggressive, and the staff left them alone. This just reinforces for the person with dementia that to avoid personal care, all they need to do is be verbally aggressive. The trick to unlearning this relationship between shouting and escaping from care, is to provide the person with dementia with the escape they are seeking, that is not contingent on their shouting. In practical terms, this means, offering frequent breaks and rewards for short intervals of participation in care activities. Over time, the person with dementia will learn to trust that they can get a break without the undesirable behaviour, and they will stop doing it altogether.

**Use simulated presence:** To facilitate care, it may be helpful to play a video or audio recording of the person with dementia's family member or friend, relaying a shared memory and asking the person with dementia to allow someone to provide care. A script can be developed in advance to maximize effect.

**Use familiarity:** Familiarize yourself with the person with dementia's preferences, likes, dislikes, and topics you can use to build rapport and trust. Consider preparing a person with dementia tip sheet/overview and keeping it somewhere accessible. This document would outline topics of conversation, interests and things to avoid. Before entering the person with dementia's room, you can take a moment to review the tip sheet to assist with the interaction. cooperation with tasks, instructions and demands. Use topics from the list described above to talk about activities, events or topics of interest to the person with dementia.

**Build rapport before care:** Spend a few minutes chatting with the person with dementia to establish some familiarity and connection. Building rapport, even routinely each day, allows the building of trust and feeling of safety, which can help increase cooperation with tasks and instructions. Use topics from the list described above to talk about activities, events or topics of interest to the person with dementia.

**Present a “First/Then Contingency”:** Consider presenting a “first/then” contingency, using something the person with dementia enjoys. In this scenario, if you know the person with dementia really enjoys coffee and cookies, after spending some time building rapport, you can then try to initiate care by letting them know what to expect next, followed by something they are known to enjoy (e.g., “OK, Mrs. P, I’m going to help you freshen up, and then I’ll get you a nice hot coffee with some cookies”). A first/then contingency has been demonstrated to increase cooperation with tasks people dislike, if they’re immediately followed by a preferred or pleasurable item or activity.

**Ask permission:** Take a moment to ask permission before proceeding. Let the person with dementia know what you are going to do, count to 5 to allow them time to listen, understand, respond and then proceed. Do this for each step of care you are going to provide.

**Let the person with dementia guide you:** Wherever possible, do personal care at the time of day when the person with dementia is typically most cooperative. A good strategy is to allow late risers to sleep in a bit later and let them wake up on their own so as not to be disruptive. Capitalizing on a person with dementia’s own natural rhythms will optimize successful outcomes.

**Choose your battles:** If a person with dementia is distressed by changing clothes, under certain circumstances, you may wish to allow them to stay in the clothes they are in. For instance, if a person with dementia is resistant to putting on pajamas, you may wish to allow them to sleep in their day clothes and then put on fresh ones the next morning.

**Consider trauma/reliving an abuse history:** If a person with dementia has experienced trauma in the past, the provision of care may trigger re-experiencing the trauma. Sexual abuse trauma can particularly be confused with removal of clothing. The key is to provide reassurance and emotional support by telling the person with dementia each thing you are going to do before you do it. Try to use the same gender caregiver where possible. Consider uncovering only one body part at a time.

**Occupy the person with dementia’s hands:** If a person with dementia is prone to become physically abusive, give them a small towel to hold to keep their hands busy.

**Play music:** Play music during care to keep the person with dementia calm and relaxed. Choose something they are known to enjoy. Sing with the music as you provide the care.

**Consider temperature:** Make sure the room is warm, turn on a space heater if necessary. Heat the towel and/or wipes you will be using for care. Turn on the shower and get it warm before bringing the person with dementia in.

**Be ready:** Prepare all care supplies, and lay everything out before you start care provision so that once you start, you can be efficient.