

## How to respond to unexpected behaviour

- ✓ Stay calm and be patient.
- ✓ Make eye contact.
- ✓ Use the person's name to get their attention.
- ✓ Try not to get upset.
- ✓ Don't interrupt.
- ✓ Offer choices.
- ✓ Talk in a normal voice.
- ✓ Avoid arguing, correcting, or criticizing.
- ✓ Hold their hand.
- ✓ Give more time for questions to be answered.
- ✓ Try to distract them.
- ✓ Try to think about what may have caused the behavior.
- ✓ Listen with your heart.
- ✓ Ask yourself – What is he trying to say? What is she trying to tell us?

## How you can help us

You can help by giving us information about your family member such as describing their usual everyday routine, favorite foods, hobbies, ways of coping with stress, and how they react to different situations. We put this information into their 'care plan'. This helps our staff know what each person likes and dislikes.

Remember, your family member might be behaving unusually for a good reason. Together, we can learn the meaning behind behaviours and either avoid or resolve the problem quickly.

Developed by the Identification and Response to Behaviours of Adults in Care Clinical Practice Guideline Shared Work Team

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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

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# Understanding Behaviour

## A Guide for Families

*"My father never reacted this way before."*

*"I have never known Mom to hit someone."*

*"My brother doesn't usually swear. It's not like him."*

## All behaviours have meaning

Sometimes a person acts in unexpected ways. It can be alarming to watch someone you know behave in a way that unusual and not normal for that person.

When people have memory, thinking, or mental changes, the way they express themselves often changes. We know, no matter what the behaviour is, it has meaning.

The challenge is to learn to understand the meaning behind their behaviour and find ways to deal with what is triggering the behaviour.



## Behaviours you might see

- asking the same question over and over again
- repeating movements or words
- fidgeting, having a hard time sitting still
- repeating phone calls
- repeatedly asking to go home
- picking at clothes or objects
- pacing up and down
- wandering the halls
- yelling, swearing, screaming, making threats
- hitting, biting, kicking
- mood changes
- confusion
- poor memory

## What makes a person behave this way?

There are many things that could trigger these behaviours.

Possible causes could be:

- a bladder infection
- being thirsty or hungry
- constipation
- pain
- feeling tired
- not being able to tell us what they need (frustration)
- not being able to see or hear well
- being in unfamiliar surroundings (they may not remember where they are)
- too much noise
- getting in their personal space
- items not within reach
- not having privacy
- feeling lonely