

Reacting to Alzheimer's Patients

A patient with Alzheimer's disease may start acting oddly, refusing to brush teeth for example or always asking to go home even if they are in their own room. While it's tempting for caregivers to correct someone with Alzheimer's disease, experts say that trying to reason with someone will get you nowhere fast. Instead, caregivers can often diffuse a difficult situation by adopting a soothing tone and redirecting the person's attention. For example, if bathing is a problem, try using a lavender- or rose-scented bubble bath. Such relaxing fragrances may even help trigger memories or distract the person by engaging their senses. If the person enjoyed music before their illness, a caregiver might play jazz, classical or oldies during a bath to reduce the stress associated with bathing.

Alan Dengiz, MD, director of geriatric medicine at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan, offers another common challenging scenario and possible solution. "One of the things that happens, especially as the day progresses, is that the individual with Alzheimer's disease will say, 'I want to go home' when they're in their home. What they're thinking about oftentimes is a home from their past because that's what's still alive in their brain, whereas the current home is not as familiar to them because they've lost the more recent memories." Instead of trying to correct the patient, go along with what they are saying. You can say, 'Well, let's go home later on, but why don't we go into the kitchen and have a nice cup of tea and just sit down and relax?' Sometimes that's enough to do it. It will often keep the person satisfied and avoids angry situations.

Source: <http://www.fitandfabliving.com/index.php/general-family-health>