

PBS-guided interventions for dementia

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WELLBEING

The person is content
This state can be maintained and enhanced by activities/action described in table.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF DISTRESS

The person is beginning to get upset. Escalation can be prevented by taking steps outlined in the table.

HIGHLY DISTRESSED

The person is upset (angry, anxious, tearful).
The person cannot reason, think or reflect.
The table outlines management strategies.

FOCUS IS TO MAINTAIN WELLBEING & AVOID LIKELY TRIGGERS

Involve the person and be respectful: Include the person in decisions when possible, offer choices and promote dignity.

‘Do with’ rather than ‘do to’: Promote independence by finding ways the person can participate in tasks, whatever their abilities.

Know the person: Find out about the person’s family, job, hobbies, important routines and their likes/dislikes (including food & drink). Identify preferred conversational topics and ‘treats’ to engage the person. Allocate favourite staff members when possible.

Use meaningful activities: Boredom can trigger distressed behaviour. Find out which activities are important currently (this may link with the person’s job, leisure or caring roles). Adapt tasks to be ‘failure free’ and not cause frustration. Use tasks that provide pleasure and achievement. Fresh air is often important.

Communicate skilfully: Connect with the person at their level, based on the stage of dementia. Go with the flow and enter their reality (so long as the person isn’t distressed by this) and be prepared to have conversations that might not make sense to you. Emotions matter more than facts in dementia care.

FOCUS IS TO IDENTIFY & DEAL WITH TRIGGERS (includes REDIRECTION)

Act fast when notice early signs of distress: Identify the ‘early’ signs of distress and quickly respond before things escalate.

Manage triggers: Once triggers have been identified, manage these (for example, avoid sitting Fred next to Mary at dinner).

Swap staff or change environment: A new person or change of scenery may help. Consider swapping in a preferred staff member/authority figure.

Avoid ‘problematic’ words: Rather than saying things like “no”, “stop” or “sit down”, which may make the person feel controlled, ask for the person’s advice, opinion or help instead.

Take a customer service approach: Think John Lewis! Be polite, respectful, apologise, listen and try to solve the problem or find a compromise.

FOCUS IS TO KEEP PEOPLE SAFE & REDUCE EMOTION IN ORDER TO PROMOTE REASONING & ALLOW NEGOTIATION

Give space: Make the situation safe and keep your distance. Now is not the right time for trying to persuade, reason or talk things through.

Stay calm: Do not crowd the person and only one person should talk at a time. Allow the person more time to respond (7 second rule). Use simple phrases only: “how can I help?”, “what do you need?”.

Watch your body language: Approach from the front with a relaxed, open posture. Avoid frowns, raising your voice or having arms folded.

Consider restrictive practices: Restrictive practices (such as medication or isolation) may be needed if the above strategies have limited success.