

# Living Well with Dementia

## Caregiver Tips on Hallucinations



### What Could Be Causing This Behavior?

- Changes in the brain caused by dementia.
- Side effects of certain medications.
- Consuming too much of a certain medication.

### Dementia and Types of Hallucinations:

- Visual hallucinations can range from something simple such as flashing lights to something more complex such as animals or people.
- Hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling are other forms of hallucination, but are less common for individuals living with dementia.
- Hallucinations are more common with individuals who are diagnosed with Lewy Bodies dementia. This is usually presented in the form of brightly colored people or animals.

Hallucinations occur when someone experiences something that is not really there. Although hallucinations can occur with any of the five senses, visual hallucinations are most common with individuals living with dementia.

Trying to convince someone that they are not seeing or hearing something can cause more confusion, anxiety, frustration and can lead to an adverse reaction.

### How You Can Help

#### Reassure the Individual

- How you respond will directly affect the individual's behavior. Reassure them that you are there and they are safe with you.
- Depending on the type of hallucination, gentle patting may help redirect their attention and reduce the hallucination.
- Acknowledge how they are feeling. Are they worried? Scared? Happy?
- Talk about the hallucination and what it means to the individual experiencing it.

#### Distract the Individual

- Remove the individual from the current area they are in.
- Move to a well-lit area.
- Go for a walk with the individual.
- Play familiar music.
- Engage in favorite activities to help redirect their attention.

#### Seek Advice from a Professional

- The doctor can confirm if the hallucinations are a side effect of any of the medications the individual is taking.
- Bring a list that provides information on the hallucinations:
  - What time of day did this occur?
  - What was happening at the time the hallucination took place?
  - What are the hallucinations (are they visual? can they tell you what they saw?).
  - Where did the hallucination occur?
  - How did the individual respond to the hallucination?

**For more information about caregiver tips or program availability through Living Well with Dementia, please contact Easterseals Homemakers & Health Services at 603.335.1770.**