

Living Well with Dementia Caregiver Tips on Repetition



Why does this happen?

- Dementia affects short-term memory. Often times, the individual living with dementia does not remember asking or saying something.
- The individual may be bored or under stimulated.
- The individual may have difficulty trying to say what they need or want.
- There may be an emotional attachment to what they are repeating. It could be a memory that has significant importance to them.
- Repetitive questions may be a sign that the individual is anxious.
- As dementia progresses, an individual may have a difficult time trying to remember the word they are looking to use. They may become “stuck” and repeat words or phrases.
- Repeating an activity could represent a meaningful memory.
- The individual may be frustrated with trying to express themselves and not be able to find the word. Watch body language to see if they are becoming upset and if you should intervene.

It is inevitable that an individual with dementia will have some form of repetition. This may be in the form of asking the same questions or repeating the same story multiple times.

The individual living with dementia is unaware that they are repeating themselves. The ability to recall recent conversations or events becomes increasingly difficult as the dementia progresses.

Learning how to respond and cope with repetition is essential for the caregiver.

How You Can Help

How should you respond?

- Accept that this is common with dementia and is usually not harmful.
- Remain calm and patient. The individual living with dementia may not recall that they have already spoken to you or asked you the question. Becoming upset or irritated will cause more anxiety and frustration for all parties involved.
- Redirect the individual to an activity they are interested in and enjoys. They may just be bored and need something to preoccupy their mind.
- Try to locate the reason behind the repetitive behavior. Is there a specific time of day this occurs? Is the behavior only present around specific people?
- Answer the individual when they ask a question even if you have already provided them the answer before.
- If the individual continues to ask the same question for a period of time, it may be beneficial to write down the answer and place it in a location that is easy to see.

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