

Living Well with Dementia Caregiver Tips on Resistance



What could be causing this behavior?

- Conflicting visual and verbal cues. Due to the damage of the brain, the individual will most likely pay more attention to what they see as opposed to what they hear.
- Too much talking on the caregiver's part. The more the caregiver talks, the harder it is for the individual living with dementia to understand.
- Approaching the individual living with dementia can cause them to be fearful. Approaching the individual in a way that allows them to feel comfortable can help decrease resistance.
- Irrational and uncontrolled behavior is common as the disease progresses due to the brain having a difficult time controlling impulses.
- If the individual is being rushed, they may become frustrated and resistant to receiving help or support.
- The individual may be delusional and believe something is happening that they are fearful of or confused about.
- Their basic needs may need attention. They could be hungry, hot, cold, thirsty, tired, etc.
- The individual may feel like they have lost their independence and may become upset that they can't complete activities of daily living without support or guidance.

Individuals living with dementia may become resistant at times. This may come in the form of refusing to take a bath, getting dressed, eating, leaving the house or even going to the doctors.

There are many reasons why the individual may become resistant. They could feel like they are losing control of their independence, confused about what they have been asked to do or ashamed they require help to complete activities of daily living.

When encountering resistance, it is important to develop different strategies to provide the care and support without offending, upsetting or overwhelming the individual living with dementia.

How You Can Help

- Don't argue! Trying to convince the individual or explaining your reasoning will only create more anxiety and confusion.
- Determine if the task they are refusing to do is a matter of safety or personal preference. Activities such as bathing do not need to be done daily. However, if the individual is refusing to eat or drink, then you should contact their PCP.
- Complete activities they are more resistant to during the time they are more relaxed. Often times, individuals living with dementia are more compliant in the morning after they have slept and the brain has been able to rest for several hours.
- Use visual cues. It is easier for them to understand visual cues as opposed to listening to instructions.
- Use distractions. Offer to go for a walk or see if they would like a snack. During this time, they may calm down and be more compliant to complete the activity.
- Make sure all choices are as simple as possible. For example, ask if they would like to wear the blue or black shirt.
- Break down tasks into the simplest steps as possible. 1 or 2 step tasks are easier to complete and will cause less distress and anxiety.
- Talk to them like an adult. By talking to them like a child, it could offend them and cause them to be less compliant when completing activities of daily living.

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