

# Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia

A person with dementia may begin to think, feel and behave differently due to their condition.

These changes are called the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) and are common.

At times they can be distressing and challenging for the person, as well as relatives, carers and other residents.

This factsheet describes some of the common symptoms.



**We must remember to look at a person as a whole.** Other issues like infection, pain or medication side effects could also be causing changes in behaviour.

## Delusions

Having a very fixed belief about something which is not true.

Although it is not real to us, it feels very real to the person.

People are stealing things  
The house is not home  
Spouse/carers is an imposter  
Spouse has been unfaithful



## Hallucinations



Seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling or feeling things that are not there.

Although it is not real to us, it feels very real to the person. Seeing or hearing people, small children, animals.



## Anxiety

Feelings of worry or nervousness about what might happen in the future.

Fear of being left alone  
Asking the same question over and over  
Looking for family/carers  
Wanting reassurance  
Picking at skin/clothes



## Depression

Constant feelings of sadness over a long period of time.

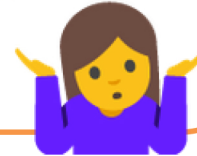


- Sadness and withdrawal
- Low self esteem
- Loss of interest in activities
- Change in appetite and sleep
- Wanting to die or hurt self

## Apathy

A loss of interest. This includes in activities, personal care and whilst interacting with others. Apathy is not the same as laziness!

- Not wanting to join in activities
- Talking to other people less
- Fewer facial expressions



## Misidentification

Wrongly recognising things such as people, places, objects or events.

- Not recognising own reflection in the mirror
- Trying to pick objects from patterned carpet
- Someone else is living in the home (phantom boarder)



## Agitation

Restlessness which could be due to anxiety, frustration, pain.

- Repeating tasks such as dressing/ undressing
- Repeating sentences and questions
- Pacing up and down
- Hiding things
- Picking at skin/clothes



## Disinhibition

A loss of inhibitions. Inhibitions are self-conscious feelings about the things we say and do.

- Swearing
- Sexual or rude comments
- Undressing in public areas
- Out of character behaviour
- Grabbing other people



## Walking with Purpose

Many people with dementia feel the urge to walk about and sometimes even leave the home. This might be due to:

- Boredom, feeling lost
- Seeking activity/exercise
- Looking for someone/something
- Part of their old routine
- Sun downing – a change in routine



## Complaining

People with dementia may complain to staff and relatives. They may sometimes even accuse, which can be challenging.

- Often based on hallucinations/delusions such as somebody is stealing

- The person wants to be listened to



## Extreme Reactions

Sudden emotional or physical response which might seem unreasonable.

- Rapid changes in emotion
- Throwing things
- Swearing
- Shouting or screaming
- Crying or laughing



## Aggression

This can be verbal and physical. The person may be trying to tell us their feelings or needs.

- Hitting
- Screaming, shouting, swearing
- Pushing
- Grabbing things/people
- Kicking and biting

