



Adjustment Difficulties

This person will have difficulty when facing a new situation. They may respond by displaying difficulty in locating rooms, a disorientation to the time and place in which they are living and resistance to new caregivers or schedules.¹

What to Look for:

- ✓ The resident may express that they are overwhelmed and become resistant to participating in an activity if they are facing a new situation.
- ✓ This person might need help finding their own room or a room where an activity is taking place.
- ✓ Resistive comments might be made when the person is asked to participate in a new activity or situation.

What to Do:

Reduce stress and uncertainty by providing a guided tour and introducing the resident to the next event and to new peers.

To help the person locate their own room, put a meaningful or familiar object by the door.

Reassure the resident by complimenting them for participating in new activities and situations.

When facing a new situation, offer the resident opportunities that are familiar to them that will pair with that new activity.²

¹ The Dementia Care Plan Dictionary, M. Nolta and B. Hall, 2005.

² Cohen-Mansfield, J., Dakheel-Ali, M., & Marx, M. S. (2009). Engagement in persons with dementia: the concept and its measurement. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry: Official Journal of the American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry*, 17(4), 299-307.





Anxiety Related to New Places

This resident may become anxious or distressed when they are asked to attend a small or large group activity. They may feel nervous or act agitated when they are in environments outside of their own room or the lobby area.¹

What to Look for:

- ✓ The person may look uncomfortable or act agitated when they are in small and large group settings outside of their own room.
- ✓ The resident may smile and relax when moved from a group setting into their own room, open hallway or a patio next to staff members.
- ✓ Determine if the person is agitated because they are tired or fearful.

What to Do:

Offer the resident a place of comfort by suggesting a one-on-one or very small group type of activity.

Decrease anxiety by approaching the person from the front, doing things one step at a time and providing verbal reassurances in a calm manner.²

Ask the resident to participate in activities that relate to their individual interests and consider gradual exposure to different settings as their comfort level increases.^{3,4}

1 The Dementia Care Plan Dictionary, M. Nolta and B. Hall, 2005.

2 Kraus, C. A., Seignourel, P., Balasubramanyam, V., Snow, A. L., Wilson, N. L., Kunik, M. E., ... Stanley, M. A. (2008). Cognitive-behavioral treatment for anxiety in patients with dementia: Two case studies. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, 14(3), 186–192.

3 Kolanowski, A., Flick, D. M., & Buettner, L. (2009). Recreational activities to reduce behavioral symptoms in dementia. *Geriatric Aging*, 12, 37–42.

4 Cohen-Mansfield, J., Marx, M. S., Dakheel-Ali, M., Regier, N. G., Thein, K., & Freedman, L. (2010). Can Agitated Behavior of Nursing Home Residents with Dementia be Prevented With the Use of Standardized Stimuli? *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 58(8), 1459–1464.





Anxiety Related to Feeling Overwhelmed in Group Settings

This person may become tense, anxious or overstimulated when they are in a group setting and will express their discomfort with facial expressions and increased vocalizations.¹

What to Look for:

- ✓ The resident may share that they have a more reserved personality and so larger groups of people and activity can make them feel, tense, nervous, overtired or grouchy.
- ✓ This person may seem to have a more even temperament when they are moved from a group activity to a quieter setting.

What to Do:

Watch carefully for any signs of tension, anxiety and overstimulation. When this happens, suggest that the resident move to a more quiet or calm atmosphere with one-on-one engagement.²

Ask for the resident to share their preference before going to a group activity. Find activities that are more calm and quiet if necessary that match their interests and current needs.³

¹ The Dementia Care Plan Dictionary, M. Nolta and B. Hall, 2005.

² Kraus, C. A., Seignourel, P., Balasubramanyam, V., Snow, A. L., Wilson, N. L., Kunik, M. E., ... Stanley, M. A. (2008). Cognitive-behavioral treatment for anxiety in patients with dementia: Two case studies. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, 14(3), 186–192.

³ Kolanowski, A., Flick, D. M., & Buettner, L. (2009). Recreational activities to reduce behavioral symptoms in dementia. *Geriatric Aging*, 12, 37-42.



Paranoid Expressions

This resident will exhibit behavior that can inhibit their ability to participate in activities. They might make statements such as “they’re going to get me if I leave my room” or “they have stolen my money.”¹

What to Look for:

- ✓ This person may experience social withdrawal, escalating ideations or react in a confrontational way with others.
- ✓ The resident may respond unfavorably to unfamiliar noises, shadows and situations.
- ✓ Family members and peers may express concern when the resident confronts them with their suspicions.

What to Do:

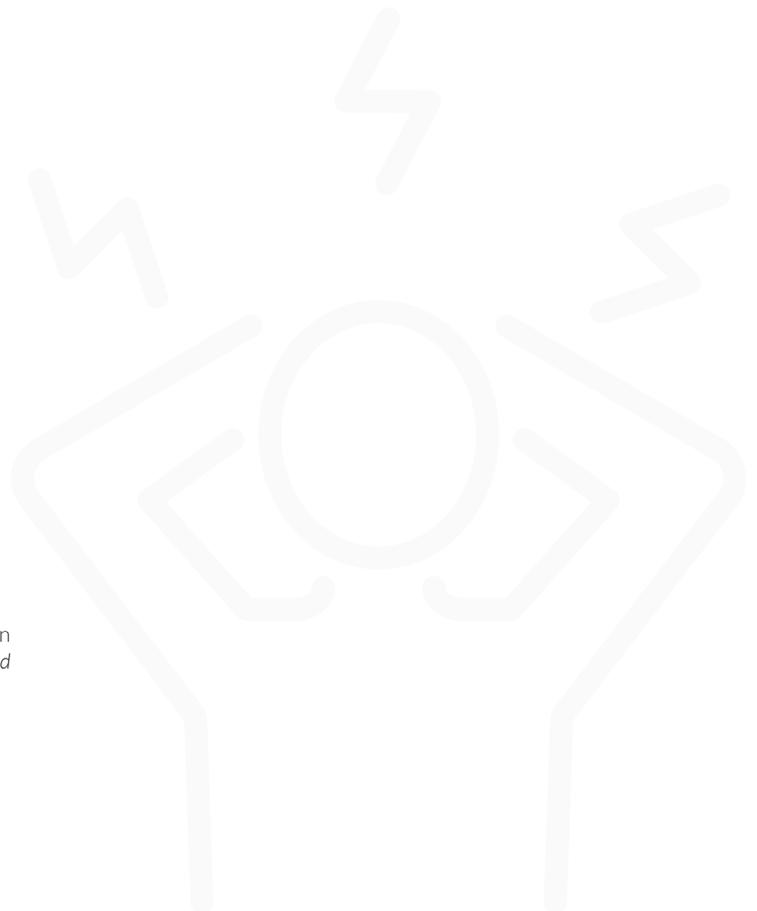
Stick with a schedule of activities that is regular to promote comfort and feelings of familiarity and safety.

Frequent assurances can be helpful to reinforce reality and validate the resident’s feelings. Try saying things like “I won’t let anything happen to you.”²

Walk around your community and find spaces that the person feels most comfortable in to reduce possible stressors in their day to day life.

¹ The Dementia Care Plan Dictionary, M. Nolta and B. Hall, 2005.

² Tondi, L., Ribani, L., Bottazzi, M., Viscomi, G., & Vulcano, V. (2007). Validation therapy (vt) in nursing home. A case-control study. *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics*, 44, 407-411.





Social Reluctance

The individual may decline to engage in group activities and claim to feel embarrassed or fearful for a particular reason, including an awareness of their own cognitive decline.¹

What to Look for:

- ✓ This person may have an overly critical self-perception.
- ✓ They may dwell on the anxiety they feel about potential opportunities for embarrassment.
- ✓ They may experience social isolation because of their inability to join others in therapeutic engagement activities.²

What to Do:

Redirect the person's attention from thoughts of embarrassment by providing encouragement and offering activities of interest to them, at their ability level.³

Provide the opportunity for one-on-one engagement if group activities lead to discomfort. Help the person leave a group activity if they are uncomfortable.⁴

Start by having the person near a group activity, and as they become more comfortable offer assistance in joining in with others.⁵

Use active listening techniques to validate their concerns and be ready to acknowledge their positive attributes and successes.⁶

1, 2 The Dementia Care Plan Dictionary, M. Nolta and B. Hall, 2005.

3, 6 Cohen-Mansfield, Jiska, Marcia S. Marx, Maha Dakheel-Ali, Natalie G. Regier, Khin Thein, and Laurence Freedman. "Can Agitated Behavior of Nursing Home Residents with Dementia Be Prevented with the Use of Standardized Stimuli?" *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 58.8 (2010): 1459-464. Web. <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2955178/pdf/nihms215230.pdf>>

4 Ann Kolanowski, D.M., Flick, and L. Buettner. "Recreational Activities to Reduce Behavioral Symptoms in Dementia." (2009) *Geriatric Aging*. 12(1): 37-42: n. pag. Web. <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2780321/>>

5 Björk, Sabine, Marie Lindkvist, Anders Wimo, Christina Juthberg, Ådel Bergland, and David Edvardsson. "Residents' engagement in everyday activities and its association with thriving in nursing homes." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 73.8 (2017): 1884-895. Web. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jan.13275/abstract>>





Social Group Reluctance

This resident may not be able to participate in group activities and will decline invitations to join them. Instead, they find pleasure in greeting visitors and staff or having simple exchanges of pleasantries with other people.¹

What to Look for:

- ✓ This person will avoid group activities but show a need to feel useful and a part of the community by engaging with others in more one-on-one ways.
- ✓ The resident may participate in larger activities but only after continuous encouragement from staff to try something new.
- ✓ Small talk with visitors, staff and volunteers will come easily with this person but they will avoid group activity settings and show discomfort if placed in that situation involuntarily.

What to Do:

Take the time to greet this person cheerfully and engage in the small talk that they find comfortable and enjoyable. Smile and compliment them to promote a feeling of belonging.

Provide the resident with a name tag and offer them the opportunity to invite visitors to sign a guest book or purchase raffle tickets as a way to promote their interests in one-on-one exchanges.

Occasionally offer to walk this person by a group activity so they can observe from afar and depending on their comfort level and interest, try inviting them to participate.²

¹ The Dementia Care Plan Dictionary, M. Nolta and B. Hall, 2005.

² The Dementia Care Plan Dictionary, M. Nolta and B. Hall, 2005.





Transition Tensions

Upon entry into a common area or room, this resident may show a tense posture, shuffle their feet or aimlessly walk around the room, have communication difficulties such as repetition of a word or mumbling.¹

What to Look for:

- ✓ Did this person just transition from a home to care center or from their own room to a group activity room? This movement could increase tensions and discomfort.
- ✓ This resident may need extra time to prepare or more explanations when they are moving to a group activity.
- ✓ Does this person show visible anxiety when they are entering a new place or situation?

What to Do:

To promote comfort, have familiar household objects (like photos) near this person when they are in the activity room or engage in familiar routines with them (reading the newspaper or making a cup of coffee).²

Always approach the resident calmly and in a relaxed manner while also providing reassurances that they are meant to be at the activity they are participating in.

Validate the person's feelings. Say you understand that people can feel uncomfortable with change ("I know most of us don't like change very much.")³

1 The Dementia Care Plan Dictionary, M. Nolta and B. Hall, 2005.

2 Allen-Burge, R., Stevens, A. B., & Burgio, L. D. (1999). Effective behavioral interventions for decreasing dementia-related challenging behavior in nursing homes. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 14, 213-28.

3 Tondi, L., Ribani, L., Bottazzi, M., Viscomi, G., & Vulcano, V. (2007). Validation therapy (vt) in nursing home. A case-control study. *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics*, 44, 407-411.

