



Expert Advice:
Family & Children's Agency Home Care Services for Seniors
Creating Calmness for Alzheimer's Patients
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For many families caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's, one of the greatest worries is the potential for changes in their behavior. Environmental influences can often increase a patient's level of anxiety leading to wandering, hoarding, sleep disturbances or overall emotional distress. Although these visible behavioral changes may be difficult to cope with, understanding what triggers such increased anxiety can make them more manageable.

First and foremost, when your loved one or someone in your care has begun experiencing these behaviors, it is important to consult their symptoms with a doctor. Second, creating a calm environment with simple routines and familiar faces can help decrease episodes of anger, outbursts, irritability and distress. Although these changes in behavior may be difficult to understand, one should place themselves in the position of the patient; they may be confused as to who their caregiver is, be struggling to communicate or unaware of their surroundings. For that reason, minor deviations from routine can trigger these outbursts. Caregivers must be flexible to adjust their schedule to meet the needs and emotional state of the patient.

The Alzheimer's Association offers many suggestions for responding to your loved one when he or she is becoming agitated:

- 1) Provide reassurance: Using calming phrases, such as, "You're safe here," "I'm sorry that you are upset," and "I will stay until you feel better," allows the patient to know that you there to support them.

- 2) Offer activities: Involving the patient in activities, such as art, music or taking a walk, can help them feel engaged and divert their attention away from their anxieties.
- 3) Modify the environment: When possible, decrease noise levels and distractions.
- 4) Be aware of your tone: It's very important for caregivers not to raise their voice, show alarm, take offense or to corner, restrain, criticize, ignore or argue with a patient with Alzheimer's. In addition, caregivers should make an effort not to make sudden movements outside the patient's view. This will only increase their anxieties.

Source: www.alz.org.

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