



Dementia and End of Life Care



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The Long Goodbye

- As Barbara Karnes explains, “From death to diagnoses is generally a very long time, most often years. Those years are filled with watching a loved one gradually become less and less able to function in the world”.
- It is hard to understand or even fathom what goes on in the mindset of someone with Dementia, but I am sure it’s a scary place to know that you are starting to lose the ability to interact with your loved, lose your conversation, and eventually your memory.



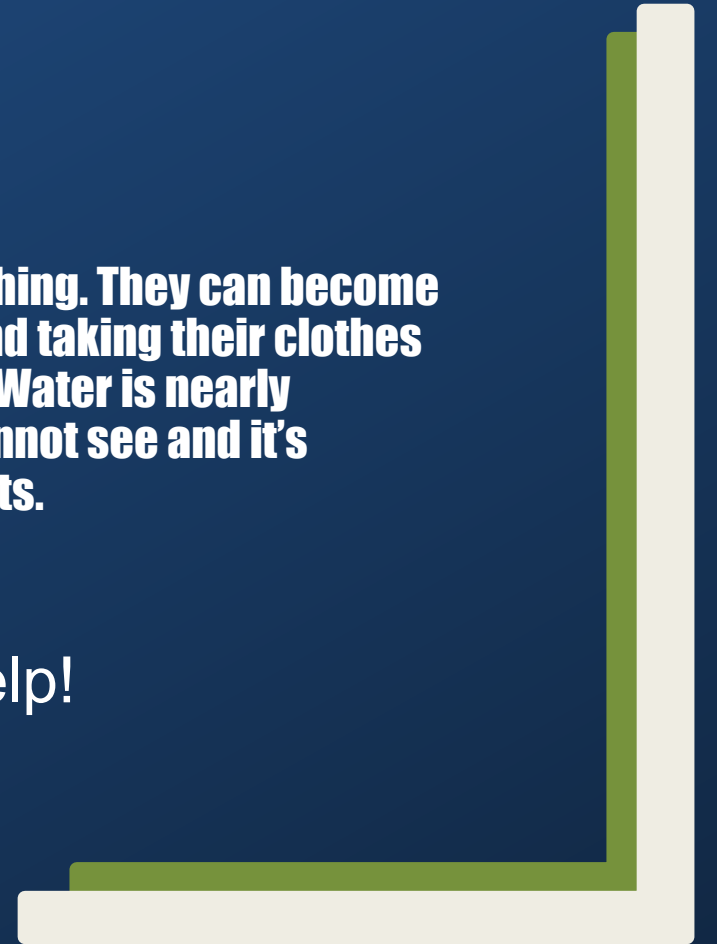
Sensory Connections

Being touched or massaged (if they allow), listening to music, sometimes listening to white noise (fan), nature sounds (water, birds, whales) often help with agitation.

Scared of water?

An even more common fear among patients who have Dementia is a fear of bathing. They can become afraid of being unsteady in the tub and falling. The thought of cold bathroom and taking their clothes causes them to act out. They no longer able to perceive water they way we do. Water is nearly invisible, and their eyesight has diminished so imagine something that you cannot see and it's hitting your skin while someone is telling you to be still so that no one gets hurts.

Let's look at some way that CNA's can help!



7 tips to help someone with Alzheimer's with showers

- 1. Establish a routine and stick to this routine as much as possible**
- 2. Make sure the bathroom warm and comfortable**
- 3. Try and use positive reinforcement and don't argue with them**
- 4. Say "we" not "you" Ex: We are going to get ready for the day!**
- 5. Use a hand-held shower head to help reduce fear and involve the patient with the process as much as possible.**
- 6. Try and limit any interruptions as "starting and stopping" causes agitation to erupt and ends up frustrating you and the patient.**
- 7. Use extra towels for comfort and warmth**

If you are giving a bed bath, try playing relaxing music and be sure to tell your patient everything that you are doing and being gentle in your touch as their skin becomes very sensitive.

Simple tips for care:

Learn something that is special about your patient and during your ADL time, talk about it with your patient even those are transitioning can still hear us. Learn to have as much patience as possible, your patient is just as frustrated as you are, but their frustration is constant. Keep a calm, even – tempered, gentle manner. Speak softly. If you feel the need to ask help from your co-workers, don't ever hesitate to ask especially if it is for the safety of your patient. Let yourself feel good about the work you do. This is hard! Realize and understand the limits of dementia. Don't try to make the patient do something that he or she cannot do. Be prepared for sudden changes in your patient's moods. Simplify task for patients and encourage them to do things when appropriate.

A person with Dementia is not giving you a hard time, A person with Dementia is having a hard time.

**“ Dementia does not rob a person of their dignity. It is our reaction to them that does”
Teepa Snow, Dementia Care Educator**

[Questions / Comments/ Helpful Tips](#)