

THE ONE-STEP METHOD

A calmer way through dressing, bathing, meals, and bedtime

Daily tasks aren't a battle of wills — they're a battle against overwhelm. Break each one into a single instruction at a time, and the resistance often disappears with it.

MORNING ROUTINE

Getting Dressed

The challenge: *Too many choices, too many steps at once — it overwhelms, and it comes out as resistance.*

STEP 1 Hand over one item only — not a full outfit laid out.	STEP 2 Give one instruction: “Arms first.”	STEP 3 Wait. Let them finish before the next cue.	STEP 4 Repeat, same calm pace, one item at a time.
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Tip: If they resist a specific item, don't argue — offer the next item and circle back later.

PERSONAL CARE

Bathing

The challenge: *Bathing can feel cold, exposing, or frightening. Resistance is usually fear, not stubbornness.*

STEP 1 Warm the room first: “Let's get you warm and comfy.”	STEP 2 Start with hands or feet, not the whole body at once.	STEP 3 Hand them the washcloth for a sense of control.	STEP 4 Narrate gently as you go: “Just your arm now.”
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Tip: Same time, same routine, same person each time reduces anxiety before it starts.

MEALTIMES

Eating

The challenge: *A full plate or unfamiliar cutlery can overwhelm — it often looks like refusal, but it's confusion.*

STEP 1 One food item on the plate at a time.	STEP 2 Use a plate that contrasts with the food's colour.	STEP 3 Model it — eat alongside them.	STEP 4 Offer finger foods if utensils become a struggle.
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Tip: Turn off the TV or radio during meals — less background noise means less distraction-driven refusal.

EVENINGS

Bedtime & Sundowning

The challenge: *Confusion and agitation often spike in the late afternoon and evening — known as sundowning.*

STEP 1 Start winding down earlier than feels necessary.	STEP 2 Dim the lights gradually; leave one soft light on overnight.	STEP 3 Keep the pre-bed routine identical, same order, every night.	STEP 4 If they resist, redirect gently rather than argue the clock.
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Tip: Cut caffeine and high-stimulation activity after early afternoon.

One instruction, one moment at a time — that's the whole method.

For the words to use alongside these steps — especially when they resist or grow upset — see Guide 1: “10 Things to Say Instead of Correcting Them.”

GOOD TO REMEMBER, EVERY DAY

- Slow down before you speak. Your calm is contagious — so is your stress.
- Offer, don't ask. “Here's your jumper” works better than “What do you want to wear?”
- Same task, same time, same order, every day. Routine lowers anxiety before it starts.
- If a task isn't going well today, it's OK to stop and try again later.