

What to Say to Stop Challenging Dementia Behaviors

4 Steps to Determine How to Respond

1. Don't try to convince them of something they don't already believe
2. Give them or ask them to tell you an explanation that would make the most sense to them in their current reality.
3. Assure them their feelings are normal/valid
4. Once they are calm, get them to do something else

Example #1:

Mom is insisting you tell her the truth about if her husband is dead. What should you do?

Let's go through our checklist:

1. Since she is explicitly asking for the truth, chances are she already believes that her husband may have passed.

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2. Since her husband's passing is already a part of what she already believes, it is ok to tell her that her husband has indeed passed.

3. Assure her that her feelings are valid.

4. Again, since she asked you directly, see how she reacts. Is she going through the grieving process, is she relieved she knows the truth? No matter what happens, once she is calm you can do something else, not before.

#2 SITUATION:

Barbara is insisting she has to go home in order to get to her small kids. What should you do?

Again, let's go through the checklist:

1. To Barbara, she isn't 94 like she is in your reality, she is 30. Also, her kids are 4 and 5 and not in their 70's in her reality.

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2. Trying to convince her that isn't the case is pointless at best and will make her more distressed at worst. Instead, give her or ask her for an explanation about her kids that would help her feel like her kids are safe while she is away.

3. Validate her feelings about her kids.

4. Once she is calm, engage her in something else.