



# Keeping the Peace with a Changing Mind

Dementia or brain failure leads to memory loss but in addition we sometimes see mood swings, frustration, anxiety and more. This can also lead to aggressive behavior. Sadly, our culture has come to expect this behavior as a normal part of this disease. What if there were a better explanation and a way to prevent this?

Consider what it would be like if you wanted to tell me something, but you have dementia, so you could not find the right words? Or maybe I come in to care for you and accidentally startle you from behind as I am trying to get you to stand up and go to the bathroom. Either of these would be very frustrating and eventually could lead to you being verbally abusive or physically aggressive.

Let's take a step back and see what happened from the individual's perspective. You were sitting quietly in your room when you felt someone grabbing you and there was a loud voice, so you tried to defend yourself from an assault. You swung at them with all of your strength and yelled mean things in order to save yourself from this perpetrator. You are upset, frightened, and confused.

Remember that as we age, our ability to process information slows down. Add dementia, visual changes, and hearing loss to the mix, and we will definitely need more time to understand what we are being asked to do.

Learn to be a detective and not a judge. Always approach them from the front and stop outside of their personal space. Smile, introduce yourself, extend a hand, and wait. Go slow and don't move in until they respond indicating that they are comfortable with what you are doing. Make a positive connection with a compliment and be willing to step back and evaluate what they are communicating to you. Go with their flow and allow yourself to change your agenda for care based on their response. Bring them joy in the moment! They are counting on us.