



Accusations



It's common for people with dementia to lose things and subsequently blame or make accusations of those around them. Accusations are symptoms of dementia and are related to cognitive decline, but it's hard not to take it personally.

Here are some strategies to help minimize the behavior and build trust.

Be supportive, not defensive: Stay calm.

- Use a gentle touch and soft voice, and keep communication simple.
- Avoid contradicting their statements or giving defensive explanations, because it can escalate a situation.
- Listen to their concerns, reassure, and distract with a meaningful activity.
- Understand that accusations are a way to make sense of a confusing situation.

Be proactive and resourceful:

For the person with dementia, the ability to find lost items means independence and control.

- Empathize with their feeling of loss.
- Keep inexpensive copies of items that are frequent subjects of fixation/accusations (purses, watches, jewelry, small cash amounts, or even color copies of the documents).
- Identify the "hiding spots," where a person with dementia hides things, to speed up the search.
- Use assistance of GPS tracking devices like TILE® for wallets, cell phones, or keys.

Engage as a distraction:

For the person with dementia, they often feel worried due to declining cognitive ability or the inability to have the independence they once had.

- Engage in a conversation. Ask questions about the issue they are concerned about, even if it doesn't make sense.
- Create a comfortable and calm environment.
- Understand that a person with dementia is not trying to hurt you; their accusations are a mix of leftover memories, a fight for independence, and a made-up reality to avoid looking helpless.
- It's important to avoid making statements that try to convince the person of why their accusation is not true.
- Their accusations will turn to gratitude if you create a partnership. Offer to help find the item or solve the problem they are explaining.

Seek Advice:

- Remember that you have the Seniors At Home team to support you—just ask!

Contact Seniors At Home's Center for Dementia Care
Call 415-449-3700, email dementiacare@jfcs.org or visit seniorsathome.org