



“I want to go home!”



One of the most common requests made by people with dementia is to go home. Unfortunately, it doesn't help to remind the person that they already are home, but there are some helpful steps you can take to address their feelings.

Check for distress:

Observe facial expression, body language, emotional state.

- **If no:** Understand that because of memory loss, the environment feels unfamiliar. Show the person through body language and familiarity that they are in the “right” place.
- **If yes:** Rule out any underlying causes of distress—pain, hunger, thirst, boredom, need for the restroom.

Avoid contradictions:

Help the person feel safe and familiar

- Remember that people with dementia ask to “go home” when they are feeling unsure or uncomfortable.
- Stay away from explaining that they are home, or that they are in their new home. Similarly, don't try to explain why home isn't an option.

Create the right environment:

Engage the senses in a positive way, focus less on explanations

- **Smell:** Aromatherapy—Jasmine, lavender, lemon are the most common.
- **Sound:** Play the person's favorite music.
- **Sight:** Look at familiar things that are enjoyable to the person—pictures, imagery, outdoors.
- **Touch:** Show support through physical touch—hand holding, placing hand on shoulder. Try introducing interesting textures: folding laundry, holding papers, a pet.

Identify patterns:

Start a log to notice trends and triggers

- Does the person you care for say this around the same time every day? Try doing an enjoyable, structured activity at that time of day before they begin to verbalize this request.
- Track effective topics of conversation and interventions and have them ready when you need them.

Stay confident:

When one intervention is ineffective, try not to be discouraged. Simply try a new intervention.

Seek advice:

Always 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