



# Dealing with Sexual Disinhibition

## DO'S AND DON'TS

We must remember that dementia is a disease and that the brain is physically changing. These changes cause a person to act differently. The most effective way to deal with sexual disinhibition is to make observations about the behavior, identify possible triggers, and develop a strategy in response. Below are some simple do's and don'ts when dealing with sexual disinhibition in a person with dementia.

### Don't:

- **Label people** by saying “wanderer” or “sexually aggressive.”
- **Tell the person that it is inappropriate.**
- **Try to reason with them.**
- **Scold them.** Disinhibition in dementia is due to physiological changes in the brain—not because the person is a “pervert” or that the disease has made them stop thinking about how others feel.
- Generally, it is not productive to tell the person you are married.

### Do:

- **Acknowledge the person's desire to engage in sexual behavior.** As we age, our desire for sexual attention does not go away.
- **Consider that the behavior stems from an underlying need for affection.** Look for other ways to fulfill this basic human need for affection and appropriate touch.
- **Observe if any particular care tasks are triggering sexually inappropriate behavior.**
- **Place an object of interest in the person's hand** during care and/or during times when you know the behavior might occur.
- **Engage in a conversation about love or affection.** Perhaps offer an alternative form of affectionate touch like a back massage.
- **Divert attention to a known activity of interest.** For example, play the person's favorite song.
- **Be assertive in delivering direction to divert attention.** Stay confident and strong.
- **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](mailto:dementiacare@jfcs.org) or visit [seniorsathome.org](http://seniorsathome.org)