



Gaining Cooperation



A person who has dementia may refuse to do what you are asking of them – even when resisting could jeopardize their safety or wellbeing. The steps below will help you adapt your approach, reduce stress and frustration, and gain cooperation.

Identify patterns:

Consider the person's preferences, what they are feeling and why they are resisting.

- Are they overwhelmed by how many steps are involved? Do they dislike being told what to do? Could they be in pain after sitting too long?

Adapt:

Address causes for resistance and alter your approach.

- Take it one step at a time.
 - For example: If the person is sitting comfortably in their favorite chair, it may be hard to understand why someone is telling them about a doctor's appointment at the last minute (short term memory loss!). They may also be trying to recall who the doctor is, where they are located, and how they will get there. All of this can feel overwhelming.
 - Instead of beginning with: *"It's time to go to your doctor's appointment,"* start with a simple request such as: *"Let's stand up together,"* or *"Let's get some fresh air."*
- Offer reassurance and support to make the person feel comfortable with the task at hand.
- Frame your request as a choice, rather than a direction.
 - For example, *"Your favorite Dr. Smith called and wants to see if you can stop by today. I'd be happy to drive with you, what do you think? It's such a nice day."*
- Empathize with any obstacles that may be causing resistance.
 - If it may be hard for the person to stand up, offer empathy such as, *"When I sit too long, my legs get stiff. Let's try some stretches."*

Avoid arguing:

A person with dementia needs to feel supported and validated. Arguing only creates more resistance.

- If your request is met with refusal (*"I don't need to go to that appointment"*), avoid disagreeing.
- Find a way to stick to the narrative.
 - For example, *"You're right, maybe we can go this once and let them know we don't need to go again until next year,"* or *"I'm glad you're telling me this, why don't we just take a drive and get some fresh air?"* Then you can re-introduce the idea of an appointment during the car ride.

Seek advice:

If resistance is causing ongoing stress, a professional dementia care specialist can help.

- Seniors At Home's Center for Dementia Care offers personalized, professional support to families and caregivers of those with dementia.
- Resistance is common from people experiencing dementia. Often, they will offer more cooperation to a professional who steps in than to family members and caregivers. In this way, professional support can help take the stress off of everyone involved.

To schedule a dementia care consultation email dementiacare@jfcs.org or call 415-449-3712

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