

Combativeness

Restlessness, agitation, striking out, and outbursts are usually brief, although at the time it doesn't seem that way. Unfortunately, this type of behavior is sometimes a distressing consequence of Alzheimer's disease, and a difficult symptom to deal with. The most important rule to remember is to remain calm and in control! Try to determine the cause of the agitation, ask yourself the following questions: Are there any underlying medical problems? Has frustration over something caused the outburst? Has there been a change in the environment? Furniture moved around? Has there been a change in daily routine? Is the individual physically uncomfortable for any reason? What is he/she trying to communicate to you? It's up to you to discover (if possible) the cause and to find a workable solution.

Routine can't be stressed enough! It's challenging for persons with Alzheimer's to cope with change. It's up to you to control the environment for him or her. Diversion can be a useful tool if you anticipate agitation. Divert his or her attention to listen to a bird outside the window, a song on the radio, or go for a short walk. Reinforce his or her sense of security; if aggressive, a touch of the hand may do the trick.

There are some situations where outbursts are frequent and/or intolerable. Medication may be the answer; however, be aware of any adverse side effects. Check with your physician and follow his or her recommendations.

Put yourself in that person's shoes for a moment. Imagine how frustrating it must be to be locked in a world of confusion! How might you react? What would make your confused world a little easier to cope with?

It is important to anticipate frustrating situations before they occur. Provide the patient with simple, clear explanations on what's happening while providing a sense of security. Above all **Remain Calm**. Slow your speech and make eye contact. Each and every situation is unique, individual and special. Be creative and open to opportunities.

It's difficult to cope with combative and agitated behavior when you are exhausted. Make sure you allow yourself some free time—take a break on a regular basis. Consider respite services, adult day care, family members, friends and neighbors who understand the situation and can handle it.