Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia

A person with dementia may begin to think, feel and behave differently due to their condition.

These changes are called the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) and are common.

At times they can be distressing and challenging for the person, as well as relatives, carers and other residents.

This factsheet describes some of the common symptoms.



We must remember to look at a person as a whole. Other issues like infection, pain or medication side effects could also be causing changes in behaviour.

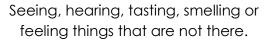
Delusions

Having a very fixed belief about something which is not true.

Although it is not real to us, it feels very real to the person.

People are stealing things
The house is not home
Spouse/carer is an imposter
Spouse has been unfaithful

Hallucinations



Although it is not real to us, it feels very real to the person. Seeing or hearing people, small children, animals.











Anxiety

Feelings of worry or nervousness about what might happen in the future.

Fear of being left alone
Asking the same question over and over
Looking for family/carers
Wanting reassurance
Picking at skin/clothes

Depression

Constant feelings of sadness over a long period of time.



Sadness and withdrawal
Low self esteem
Loss of interest in activities
Change in appetite and sleep
Wanting to die or hurt self

Apathy

A loss of interest. This includes in activities, personal care and whilst interacting with others. Apathy is not the same as laziness!

Not wanting to join in activities

Talking to other people less

Fewer facial expressions



Misidentification

Wrongly recognising things such as people, places, objects or events.

Not recognising own reflection in the mirror Trying to pick objects from patterned carpet Someone else is living in the home (phantom boarder)



Agitation

Restlessness which could be due to anxiety, frustration, pain.

Repeating tasks such as dressing/ undressing
Repeating sentences and questions
Pacing up and down
Hiding things
Picking at skin/clothes

Disinhibition

A loss of inhibitions. Inhibitions are selfconscious feelings about the things we say and do.

Swearing
Sexual or rude comments
Undressing in public areas
Out of character behaviour
Grabbing other people



Walking with Purpose

Many people with dementia feel the urge to walk about and sometimes even leave the home. This might be due to:

Boredom, feeling lost
Seeking activity/exercise
Looking for someone/something
Part of their old routine
Sun downing – a change in routine

Complaining

People with dementia may complain to staff and relatives. They may sometimes even accuse, which can be challenging.

Often based on hallucinations/delusions such as somebody is stealing

The person wants to be listened to

Extreme Reactions

Sudden emotional or physical response which might seem unreasonable.



Rapid changes in emotion
Throwing things
Swearing
Shouting or screaming
Crying or laughing

Aggression

This can be verbal and physical. The person may be trying to tell us their feelings or needs.

Hitting
Screaming, shouting, swearing
Pushing
Grabbing things/people
Kicking and biting



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