

Changed behaviour - loss of inhibition

Information about dementia
for residents, family and carers



People living with dementia often behave, think and act differently to how they used to.

Changes taking place in the brain can cause some people to lose their sense of what is seen as normal behaviour. They may act in ways that are embarrassing or seem rude or insensitive.

This can include making rude or tactless comments, undressing or sexually expressing themselves in public, which can be upsetting for others.

This is also called **disinhibited behaviour**.

What causes disinhibited behaviour?

There is no single answer. People with dementia are often not able to explain what they want or what they are feeling.

They might feel upset, uncomfortable or unwell, and no longer know what to do about it.

If a person with dementia acts in a rude or insensitive way, it may be because they have a problem they need help with. This can be things like:

- being in pain
- being constipated
- being dehydrated
- having an infection
- side effects of some medicines.

It can also be a sign of other things like:

- feeling frustrated, anxious or depressed
- not recognising people or being unaware of who other people are
- mistaking other people for their partner
- wearing uncomfortable clothes
- wanting to get away from a noisy or busy area.

Caring for someone with disinhibited behaviour

- Be reassuring and calm.
- Do not take the behaviour personally.
- Find out what might be upsetting them. For example, if they get undressed, they may need to go to the toilet, or they're too hot or uncomfortable.
- Look for solutions based on the person's past life experiences.
- Do enjoyable and meaningful activities.
- Give them privacy to maintain their dignity.
- Organise family and staff to visit more often.
- Explain to family and friends that the person is not in control of their behaviour.

Working together

Family and carers understand the person living with dementia best.

Work together with staff to share information. This helps to develop a care plan that is centred on the person. Finding out what triggers the person's behaviour can help to reduce it.

Talk to staff and ask questions about best dementia care.

Questions to ask staff

- Have you checked for pain, illness or infection?
- Is there a care plan in place to help staff manage disinhibited behaviour?
- Is a dementia specialist available to be involved in care planning?



Want to know more?

Disinhibited behaviour factsheet <www.fightdementia.org>

For expert advice and support contact Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Services on **1800 699 799** at any time of the day or night. Situations will be assessed free of charge. They can also make referrals to other services.

Disclaimer: This health information is for general purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.

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