



Florida REACH Project

Resources for Enhancing Alzheimer's Caregiver Health

Prescription for Anxiety or Worry

Specific Behavior:

Overall Goal of this Prescription:

Please remember that dealing with challenging behaviors can be stressful. The brief relaxation strategies will help you deal with stress when dealing with this challenge. In particular, we recommend using the signal breath technique immediately before you use the strategies suggested in this behavioral prescription.

Strategies for preventing a challenging behavior from occurring (try picking one thing and sticking with it for a few weeks):

1. Spend a little time every day with your loved one.

- ◆ Set aside time each day that you can give your loved one undivided attention.
- ◆ Share activities such as puzzles, storytelling (even if you've heard it before), or just have a snack together in the afternoon or evening.
- ◆ Purchase the walker that you've been thinking about and go out for walks.
- ◆ Ask other family members to spend "reassurance time" with your loved one as well, even if it's just a few times a week.
- ◆ Ask a family member to "fill in" when you can't spend time with your loved one or to give you a break.

2. Let your loved one know when you are leaving and when you will return. People with memory problems are often anxious and even frightened when away from the person who cares for them. Your family member is probably comforted by your presence more than you realize (and maybe more than he/she realizes).

- ◆ Put a message on a message board to tell him/her where you are going and when you will be back.
- ◆ Tell your loved one that you are leaving. For example, on your way out you might say "I'm leaving now to go to _____. See you around 3pm."
- ◆ Check in briefly with your loved one when you get back. For example, you might just call to him/her from the kitchen, "Just wanted to let you know that I'm back. I'll be up here taking care of some things I need to do."



3. Provide positive, enjoyable, meaningful activities for your loved one. A lot of empty time may lead to problem behaviors. Remember to match activities to your loved one's abilities.

4. Talk to the medical team. There are medications that may help with your loved one's anxiety that could improve the situation, or they may have other suggestions for helping with this issues.

Other strategies:

Strategies for guiding how you respond during or after a behavior occurs:

- 1. Look for signs that he/she is becoming upset or agitated and intervene early.**
- 2. If you see signs that your loved one is upset, provide an opportunity for him/her to talk about feelings.** People with memory problems often experience feelings and emotions long after they begin to lose their memory. Feelings and emotions may cause frustration for both you and your loved one and may lead to behavior problems if he/she is unable to express those feelings.
 - ◆ Tell the person that he/she seems to be a little bit strained, and ask if there is something he/she wants to talk about. Give the person an opportunity to talk about being worried or anxious.
 - ◆ A feelings chart may be helpful, so they can use pictures to help show how they feel.
 - ◆ Listen and provide comforting statements. For example, you might say, "No wonder you're upset if you're feeling that way. We do not want you to leave. I really like it that you're here to keep us company."
 - ◆ After giving the opportunity to discuss/express feelings, provide him/her with an activity he/she likes to do.
- 3. Provide comforting stimulation such as a favorite food, soothing music, a gentle touch.**
- 4. Talk in a calm, soothing tone of voice and offer reassurance (e.g., "You look worried today. I'm here to help. Let's do it together.").**

General Information:

You are a dedicated caregiver and you are doing a great job. We understand that this can be very upsetting to you and are committed to helping you with this challenge. We believe these strategies will help and look forward to working with you in the coming weeks.

Remember that you can reach out to the social workers on your team if you have any questions or concerns.