

Understanding & managing the cognitive and behavioral changes you may see.

COVID-19, ID & DEMENTIA

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Does a person with ID & dementia have an increased risk of contracting COVID-19?

Maybe yes, maybe no

Dementia in and of itself will not increase the risk, however...

- Comorbid health conditions common in people with ID
- Accelerated aging in DS
- Less able to use common sense (cover cough, wash hands)
- Stage of dementia (i.e. frailty, compromised immune system)

How much should we tell a person with ID & dementia about COVID- 19?

- Where are they in the disease progression?
- How have they reacted to stressful situations in the past?

Only have a conversation if the person is capable of absorbing the information.

Don't overexplain!

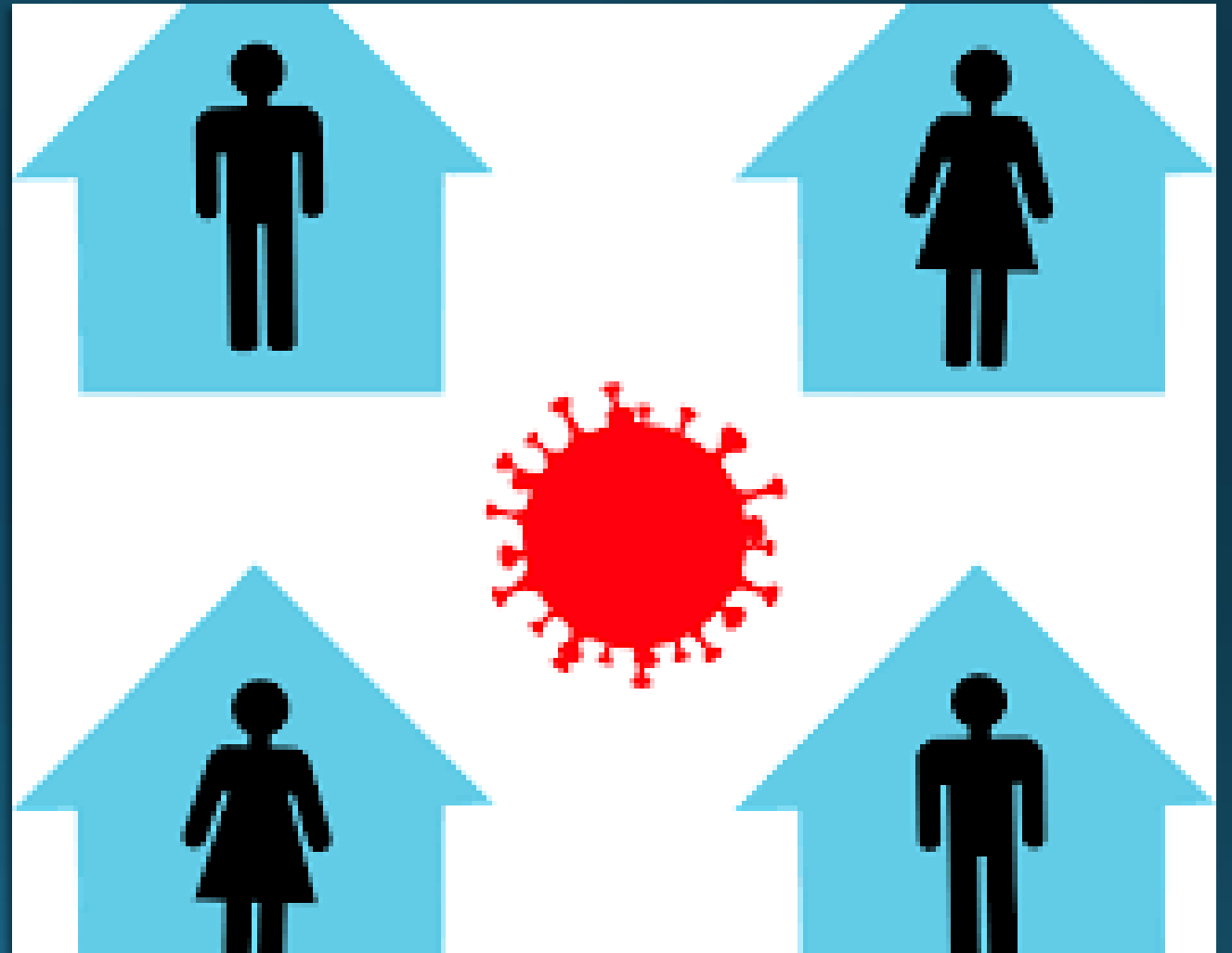
Remember: You cannot regulate the behavior of someone with brain failure!

They are going to touch their face, it's inevitable.



From the perspective of a person with dementia...

- Isolation
- Emotional contagion – worried, stressed family and carers
- Disruption to routine
- Reduced face-to-face interaction with family, friends.
- Disruption in caregivers
- Possible change in living environment
- Unable to understand public health nature of COVID-19



Because of disruption you need to anticipate that new behaviors will emerge and old behaviors may worsen.

- Insecurity and anxiety (can look a lot like anger)
- Depression, withdrawal
- Agitation
- Hostility
- Changes to sleep – wake cycle
- Delirium*



How has this person responded to stress in the past?

Delirium



- Sudden change – hours or days
 - Hyperactive, hypoactive, combination
 - Hallucinations, delusions, agitation, lethargy, personality change, etc.
- Many causes, including Covid-19
- Symptoms may not present as we would expect in a cognitively intact person, i.e. fever, cough, etc.
- Call health care practitioner, do not go to emergency room unless high fever or trouble breathing
- DO NOT be tempted to explain the sudden change away as a progression of the dementia

Ask yourself, is it...

Unmet Need, Illness

DELIRIUM (sudden change)
Change in routine
Change in living arrangement
Bored, lonely
Reduced in-person interaction
w/family, friends

No

Caregiver Interaction

EMOTIONAL
CONTAGION
Changing or
unfamiliar caregivers
Masks, gloves, etc.

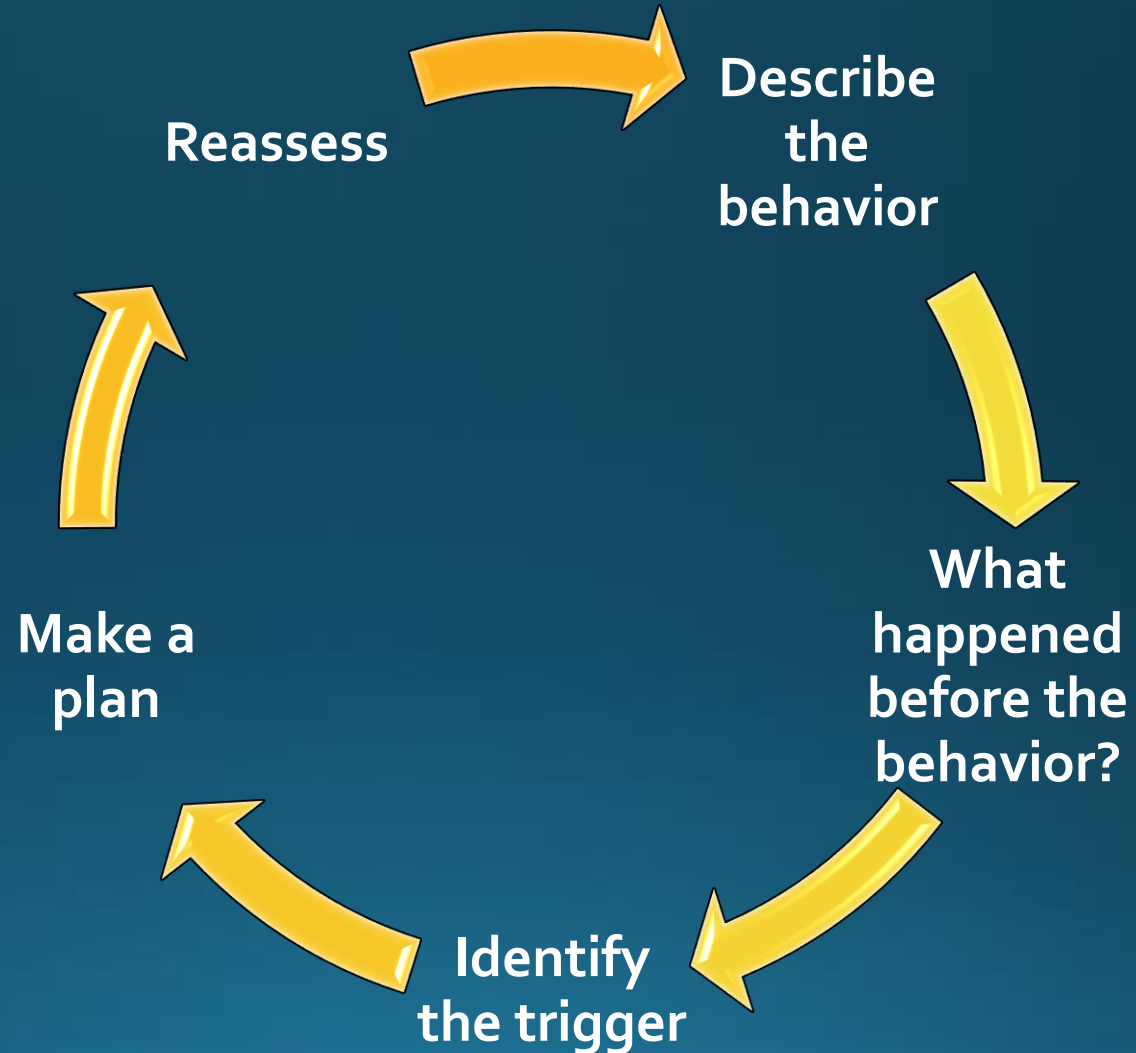
No

Environment

Television
Under stimulation
Overstimulation

Managing behaviors that emerge

Antipsychotics
are a last resort



Reassess

Describe
the
behavior

What
happened
before the
behavior?

Identify
the trigger

Make a
plan

If PWD isn't leaving the house...

Set up a regular schedule of hand-washing.

Don't obsess about the person hand-washing, wearing gloves, etc. as you may cause them unnecessary stress.

Remember, the person is unable to learn and retain new information.





Family Caregivers: What happens if you become ill?

- Anticipate less support from family and community.
- Good Idea: Fill prescriptions for a longer time period if possible to reduce trips to pharmacy.
- Do you have a plan if the day program closes?
- If you or PWD require regular visits to a health care provider is it possible to use teleconferencing or telehealth?
- Make a plan for what would happen if you become ill and can no longer provide care.
 - ASK!

Group Homes: Do you have a communications policy?

You WILL have to restrict access.
That will be very distressing to families.

Can you use technology?

FaceTime?

Videos?

Watch a tv show together?

Scheduled phone calls?

Make sure emergency contact
information is up-to-date

*How can you use technology to
minimize isolation and increase
socialization?*



Resources

Activities

- <https://adventuresofacaregiver.com/75-stimulating-activities-for-alzheimers-dementia-patients/>
- https://www.in.gov/isdh/files/101_Things_to_do_with_resident_with_dementia.pdf

Explaining COVID-19

- <https://scdd.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2020/03/Green-Mountain-SA-Info-By-and-For-People-with-Disabilities.pdf>
- <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/24/820542927/how-to-talk-about-covid-19-with-people-who-have-autism>
- <https://petervermeulenblog.wordpress.com/2020/03/16/autism-and-the-corona-virus-20-tips/>
- <https://inclusionnorth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Coronavirus-Easy-Read-Information-12.3.2020.pdf>

Thank you!!

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