

Quick Tips: Hand Out

Advanced Skills for the Most Challenging Behaviors

In working with agitated people, especially people with dementia, your goal is always to keep their level of comfort high enough so that their agitation does not turn into violent behavior. Sometimes, however, the level of anxiety or distress is so high that the individual is unable to control his/her behavior, and that behavior may become violent toward you or another caregiver.

Knowing what to do in extreme situations can help you not feel so fearful, and can, in fact, give you tools to helping people before they reach a crisis state.

The following skills are more tools for you in managing a very special population of people – learn them, and you'll be even that much more prepared for whatever challenge comes your way!

Behavior: Hitting / slapping

Try This:

- Keep your distance – try to stay out of striking range.
- Quickly hand the person something soft to hold on to, for example, a pillow or blanket. A person cannot strike you with their hands full. He/she may reflexively grab what you hand to them. If you wish to keep a further distance, toss the soft item to them – NOT at them!
- Protect your face and core body by turning away from the person. Use this technique if you cannot move away fast enough, for example if you are holding onto the person for support and cannot let go.
- Use both arms together to protect your body. Cross arms for even more protection

Behavior: Kicking

Try This:

- Get away quickly – keep out of range if possible.
- Turn your body from the waist to protect groin area, bending knee up if possible.
- Use both arms together to gently push leg down.

Behavior: Hair pulling

Try This:

- Try to lace your fingers together with the fingers of the hand pulling your hair. If you can't lace them, cup your hand over their hand.
- Move your head down and in toward the person, don't pull away.
- Gently but firmly press your interlaced or cupped hand toward your head.
- Turn your head away as soon as pressure on your hair slacks.

Behavior: Choking

Try This:

- Yell loudly. This may startle person enough to release you. If so, move away quickly.
- Raise both of your arms quickly, and step toward the person.
- Quickly turn your whole body away from the person to break the hold.
- Step well away quickly.

Behavior: Grabbing

Try This:

- Ask the person firmly to let go of you – use diversion and talk as long as the hold is not painful or dangerous.
- Move in closer to the person, and begin rotating your body in toward them.
- Make your hand into a fist, and move it down and toward the grabber's thumb and first finger. This should break the hold.

Behavior: Biting

Try This:

- Push the part of your body being bitten in toward the biter's mouth
- Ask to stop biting, while applying gently, firm and steady pressure to the jaw hinges on both sides of the mouth.