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Relationships
Dementia and Aggressive Behavior

Joan had always been a caring partner, mother and friend ... at least until her Alzheimer’s began to change her personality. Now it seemed that she lashed out, verbally and physically, at her caregivers more and more often. This aggressive behavior could be scary and it made caregiving more difficult.

More than one-third of people living with dementia behave aggressively at some point, usually in the later stages of the illness. Aggression is one of several dementia-related changes that are classified as “behaviors that challenge.” Others include agitation, restlessness, walking about, and being sexually inappropriate. Why do these occur, and what can a caregiver do to cope?

First, try to understand what may be triggering the aggressive behavior. Many people with dementia can no longer communicate clearly so you may need to do some detective work. Common triggers include:

- Discomfort from something causing pain such as constipation, dentures or arthritis
- Environmental stimulation such as loud noises or too much activity

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• Confusion from complex questions or instructions
  Once you understand what may be triggering the challenging behavior, consider what you can do to prevent or moderate the causes:
  • Keep your questions and instructions simple.
  • Limit the clutter and activity in the environment.
  • Try not to argue. Instead, sit and listen and ask basic questions.
  • Lead discussions on events from the distant past more than recent events.
  • Use memory cues for basic tasks such as notes for brushing teeth and getting dressed.
  • Try not to shout or restrain the person, since this can aggravate the situation.

  In the past, anti-psychotic drugs were sometimes used to sedate aggressive persons with dementia. Today, most doctors see that as a last resort in cases of serious delusions, distress or if the person harms caregivers. These drugs can have serious side effects and sometimes mask the underlying causes of the aggression. If drugs are used, they should be regularly reviewed and monitored.

As a caregiver, try to remember that the person is not being deliberately aggressive. There is likely some unmet need that the person cannot express. Regardless, caring for a person with aggressive behavior can be exhausting for you, so make sure to find ways that help you replenish your own emotional resources.

Resources
Shop Smart This Holiday Season
  The holiday shopping season seems to start a little earlier every year. To compete with online shopping options, brick and mortar retailers keep opening earlier and earlier. Black Friday will be well underway long before Thanksgiving dinner has been reduced to leftovers.

  Are you ready? For serious bargain hunters, all the sales the day after Thanksgiving really get the adrenaline going. To make the most of the big day, hardcore shoppers sort through a mountain of advertisements and go online to find the best prices. They plan to hit stores for time-specific sales and map out routes that cut down on time spent in traffic or looking for a parking spot.

  By the end of the day, these
exhausted but happy shoppers sleep well, knowing they got great deals on every purchase.

And then there is everybody else. Many avoid the chaos by shopping early or online. Others get caught up in the moment, joining the spending frenzy without so much as a shopping list.

While shopping smart is important every month, the stakes are especially high after Thanksgiving. Starting your holiday shopping early helps. But with a little forethought, even procrastinators can benefit from shopping smart.

Shopping smart means developing a sound spending plan for the holidays. Economic conditions are improving, but piling up a lot of holiday debt is never a good idea. Know how much money you can reasonably afford to spend. To avoid financial problems in 2017, limit your spending to the cash you set aside for the season.

Think creatively. Belt-tightening is in, wasteful spending is out. Remember, it is the thought that counts. Homemade gifts, whether food, clothing, or crafts, may be appreciated more than something purchased at the local big box store. Gifts of time for babysitting, baked goods or housecleaning may also be well-received.

Sometimes the cost to use and maintain an item makes selecting a more expensive model the cheaper option.

To conserve gasoline, avoid running from store to store. Instead, use the phone and Internet to find information. Particularly for gifts you need to send out of town, it is often cheaper to order the desired items for direct shipment to the recipient.

Shopping online can also be an easy way to locate special or unique gifts. Do be careful. Use a secure browser, shop with companies you know, and keep your password creative and private. Pay particular attention to shipping charges, and be sure to print out and keep records of your purchases.

Retailers will roll out holiday items earlier than ever this year. Sales may also start earlier as retailers clear out merchandise. That means plenty of bargains, but you will need to shop carefully to find them. The best deals may come late in the season. Waiting for last minute price cuts makes sense for items that are not in short supply.

Examine factory seconds and irregulars carefully. These items have
flaws or imperfections. Find the flaw and decide if it will make a difference. Look in your newspaper classified ads for items, too. Buying person-to-person often saves money.

Overspending can ruin the holidays and the months that follow. Shopping smart means planning ahead, and sticking to your plan. Spending only as much as you can afford will make the holidays better for you and your family—even if they do not receive everything they wanted.

Nutrition
What’s the Harm in Not Feeling Hungry?

We have all been there. The clock ticks by and we realize that we just aren’t hungry. Maybe it is because of a medication, or maybe our dentures don’t fit right. It might be an energy issue - the idea of cooking sounds exhausting. A slight decrease in hunger is a normal part of aging. If you are persistently not hungry, see your doctor. Not having an appetite could be a sign of a more serious problem. If you’re a little less hungry, or you often don’t feel like cooking, here are a few steps you can take.

Think density. In other words, get the most nutrition for every bite.

Eating foods with plenty of vitamins, minerals, and other healthy nutrients like protein, heart healthy fats, and fiber allows us to eat less food without sacrificing good nutrition.

We call these foods “nutrient-dense.” Some examples of nutrient-dense foods include fruits, vegetables, yogurt, nuts, oils (like olive and canola), and whole grains such as barley and quinoa. At lunchtime, add avocado to a small sandwich. Snack on whole grain toast with peanut butter or yogurt with nuts. For dinner, sauté vegetables in olive oil to serve with quinoa. These are all small additions. They increase the calories, protein, healthy fat, vitamins, or minerals in a small amount of food.

Think small. In addition, smaller meals may be easier to eat and take less energy to make. Aim for five to six smaller meals a day. Your doctor may recommend a liquid nutrition supplement such as a shake or beverage with added vitamins and minerals.

Eat together. Regularly invite a friend or family member to join you for a meal. You will benefit from the predictable schedule, but also enjoying the social aspect may encourage your stomach to rumble with foreseeable hunger.
Stay hydrated. Some medications, in addition to normal aging, can cause dehydration. It is important to take in enough water. You can get water through drinks and food.

Snacking and eating smaller meals more often can increase your daily intake. Eating at similar times can also help remind your body that it is time to eat. Again, if you notice that you are consistently not hungry, the smell of foods causes distress, or are having difficulties eating, see your doctor to talk about possible causes and more ways to address your situation.

### Pumpkin and White Bean Soup

*Makes 6 servings*

1 can of small white beans, navy beans, or cannellini beans 
(15-ounce can)
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 cup water
1 can of pumpkin (15-ounce can)
1 1/2 cup unsweetened apple juice
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg, allspice or ginger, if desired
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon salt

**Directions**

1. Mash white beans, onion, and water with a fork, potato masher, or blender until smooth and set aside.
2. In a large pot, stir together the pumpkin, apple juice, cinnamon, black pepper, salt, and desired spice(s).
3. Add the bean mix to the pot.
4. Cook over low heat for 15-20 minutes, until warm throughout.

*adapted from USDA Mixing Bowl available at: https://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/recipes/food-distribution-fdd/pumpkin-and-white-bean-soup*
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http://www.fcs.uga.edu/news/tag/senior+sense

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