

## **PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOR CHANGES IN A PERSON WITH DEMENTIA**

Dementia damages brain cells, so the brain works less well, and this changes how the person acts.

Common changes in personality and behavior:

- Getting upset, worried, or angry more easily
- Acting depressed or not interested
- Hiding things or believing other people are stealing or hiding things
- Imagining things that aren't there
- Wandering away from home
- Pacing a lot
- Hitting
- Unusual or inappropriate sexual behavior
- Misunderstanding what he/she sees or hears
- Stops caring how he/she looks, stops bathing, wants to wear the same clothes
- Feeling sad, afraid, anxious, or confused

How to cope with personality and behavior changes:

- Keep things simple. Ask or say one thing at a time
- Have a daily routine, so person knows when things will happen
- Reassure the person that he/she is safe and you are there to help
- Focus on her/his feelings rather than words: "You seem worried"
- Don't argue or try to reason
- Try not to show your frustration or anger. Take deep breaths and count to 10. If it's safe, leave the room for a few minutes.
- Use humor when you can.
- Give the person a safe place to pace
- Use music, singing, and dancing
- Ask the person to help you
- If the person wanders, lock the doors (when the caregiver is there), let the neighbors know, and do not leave the person unattended