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Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS"

Understanding Alzheimer's Behavior the *ABC Way*

A person with Alzheimer's disease may sometimes act in ways that are upsetting or seem aggressive. He or she may hit, scratch, or fight with the caregiver. This does *not* always happen. But if it does, it is likely to be when the person is in the middle stage of Alzheimer's disease. This stage can last for up to four years.

These actions can be upsetting and are often hard for caregivers to manage. It helps to have a plan. One that many people find easy to remember is called *ABC*. Here is what this means:

A means *Antecedent*. This refers to events that happen just *before* an upsetting action.

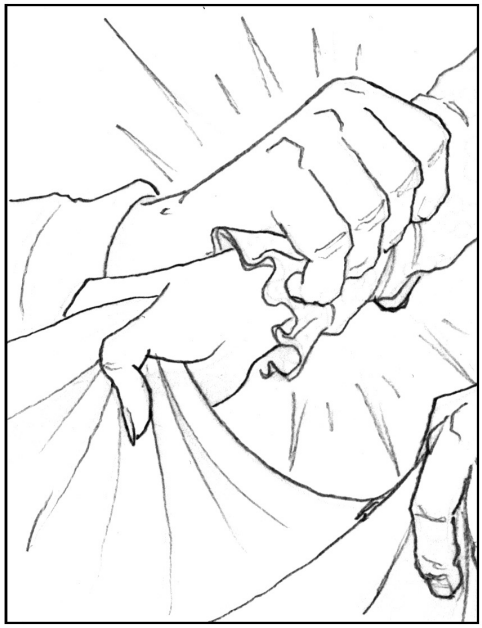
B is the *Behavior*. This means any upsetting or aggressive *action done* by the person who has Alzheimer's disease.

C refers to the *Consequence*. This includes events that happen *after* the behavior. Sometimes, these events can make the *situation* worse.

Here is a story about people we are calling Mary and Robert Jones. In this story, Mary is the caregiver for her husband, Robert, who has Alzheimer's disease. As you will see, in this story many things go wrong.

A. The Antecedent. What happened before the behavior?

Mary slept too late and now is in a hurry. She wants her husband Robert to quickly get out of bed, take a shower, eat, and get dressed before a driver arrives to take them to his doctor's appointment. Because of her late start, Mary yanks off the bed covers and yells at Robert to get up. He does not understand the words but reacts to her tone of voice. Mary gets angry when he pulls the bed covers back up. "So that's the way it will be. I'm in charge here," she yells.



Mary then drags Robert out of bed and rushes to get him dressed. Now he must balance on one leg rather than sit down to pull up his pants. This is not their usual routine when Mary takes her time helping Robert get ready for the day.

B. The Behavior.

Robert loses his balance because Mary is rushing him so much. He grabs her arm for support and does not let go. When she yells, he grabs even tighter. Robert is now digging his nails into Mary's arm.

Article continues on page 2

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C. The Consequence. The events that followed the behavior.

Mary loses control and smacks Robert in the face (something she had never done before). He hits her back.
Mary thinks he is fighting, though it may be that he is just afraid and doing to her what she did to him.

One problem leads to others and Mary now worries that Robert will hurt her again. She questions whether she can care for him at home and wonders whether Robert must go to a nursing home.

Now let's look again at this story using the *ABC* way. Mary can see that the problems started when she rushed around and did not think of how Robert would react. She now knows she must avoid these types of situations.

- Mary learned that because Robert has Alzheimer's disease, he **cannot be rushed**. While she should not feel guilty, she should realize how her actions made this worse.
- If Mary is ever late again, she will call the doctor's office and ask if they can make a new appointment or come in later in the day. This is better than expecting Robert to change his behavior.
- Mary will make a list of what happened just before Robert's upsetting behavior. She will look for causes of what went wrong and figure out ways to avoid them.
- Mary will also think about her own actions and what did or did not work well.
- Mary will use the *ABC* way to help Robert to be more cooperative in the future. This is a way to understand what happened, and figure out ways to better manage in the future.

Behaviors Caregivers Find Especially Difficult

There are some behaviors that caregivers find especially difficult. Not all people with Alzheimer's disease have these behaviors. However, it is likely that the person in your care will have one or more of these problems during the middle stage of Alzheimer's disease. It is important to try to understand why the person may be behaving in ways you find difficult, and learn how to avoid making them worse.

Source: The Comfort of Home for Alzheimer's Disease

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Taking Care of Yourself— Tips for Parents Coping with Covid

With Covid-19 there's so much that is unknown and outside of our control. Shift focus towards what you *do* know and what you *can* control.

Make a list of all the things you *do* know such as this is temporary; my family is healthy and taking all necessary precautions; young people are unlikely to get very sick.

Make a list of the things you can control: washing your hands and practicing social distancing; taking walks outside.

Anxiety can distort our thinking. Check the facts by asking questions such as: What's most likely to happen? What evidence do I have for this worry?

Source: Tips for Parents on Coping with COVID; Columbia University Department of Psychiatry

Inspiration

I have developed a new philosophy:
I dread only one day at a time.
—Charles M. Shultz

Live Life Laughing!

I'm homesick.

But you are home.

Yes, and I'm sick of it!

Memory Care - Memory Help

Everyday steps to help with memory problems:

- Colored paper or a picture of the toilet can be taped on bathroom door.
- Drawers, cabinets, and refrigerators can be labeled to show what's inside.
- Objects can be in contrasting colors so they stand out.
- Notes can be placed in plain sight as reminders.

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Due to Covid-19 this support group has temporarily transitioned to a Zoom format. Please contact the Alzheimer's Association at 800.272.3900 to register for the group and to receive the Zoom Meeting Link/Dial-In information.

STAY SAFE!!!

Your donations are important part of offsetting the cost of the Caregiver Newsletter. If you would like to donate send donations to :

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To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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SAFETY TIPS– Safe Alzheimer's Activities

Consider activities the person with dementia may enjoy—

- Creative activities such as painting, playing the piano, and using materials such as Play-Doh (if the person will not try to eat it)
- Cognitive activities such as reading a book, looking at a magazine, doing crossword puzzles
- Spiritual activities such as praying and singing a hymn
- Spontaneous activities such going out to dinner or to visit friends
- Work-related: things such as making notes, typing, or organizing coupons and other papers
- Simple household chores: dusting, drying dishes, doing the laundry

NEXT ISSUE… COVID-19 AND LUNG DISEASE

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"CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS"

QUICK QUIZ

Your caregiving will be easier and more effective if you try to understand why the person in your care may be behaving in ways you find difficult, and learn how to avoid making them worse. Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.

1. *Antecedent* means what happened *just before* an upsetting action.

T F

2. In the *middle* stage of Alzheimer's disease a person may become aggressive.

T F

3. People with Alzheimer's or dementia *always* hit, scratch, or fight with the caregiver.

T F

4. *Consequence* includes events that happen *after* the behavior.

T F

5. These aggressive actions can be upsetting and are often hard for caregivers to manage. It helps to have a plan for how to deal with them.

T F

6. Problems can get started when a caregiver rushes and does not think of how the person with Alzheimer's will react. A person with Alzheimer's cannot be rushed.

T F

7. It is important to try to understand why the person may be behaving in ways you find difficult, and learn how to avoid making them worse.

T F

8. A person with Alzheimer's may not understand the words you say but reacts to your *tone* of voice.

T F

9. Simple household chores: dusting, drying dishes, doing the laundry are *not* safe activities for a person with Alzheimer's.

T F

10. To help the person in your care with memory problems, try placing notes can be placed in plain sight as reminders of things the person in your care should do.

T F

Name_____

Signature_____ Date_____

KEY: 1. T; 2. T; 3. F; 4. T; 5. T; 6. T; 7. T; 8. T; 9. F; 10. T

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