



## Changed Behaviour – loss of inhibition

Information about dementia for people living in or visiting the residential aged care facility.

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People living with dementia often think, act, and behave differently to how they once did.

Changes taking place in the brain can cause the person to lose their sense of what is normal behaviour. They may act in ways that may be embarrassing or seem rude or insensitive.

This can include making rude or tactless comments, undressing or sexually expressing themselves in public, which can be upsetting for the person and for others.

This is also called **disinhibited behaviour**.

### What causes disinhibited behaviour?

There is no single answer. People with dementia are often unable to explain what they want or what they are feeling.

They might feel upset, uncomfortable or unwell, and no longer know what to do about it.

If a person with dementia acts in a rude or insensitive way, it may be because they have a problem they need help with. This can include:

- being in pain
- being constipated
- being dehydrated
- having an infection
- a side effect of some medications

It can also be a sign of:

- feeling frustrated, anxious, or depressed
- not recognising people or being unaware of who people are
- mistaking other people for their partner
- wearing uncomfortable clothing or footwear
- wanting to get away from a noisy or busy area.



## Caring for someone with disinhibited behaviour

- Be reassuring and calm.
- Do not take the behaviour personally. Find out what might be upsetting them. For example, if they get undressed, they may need to go to the toilet, or they are too hot.
- Look for solutions based on the person's life experiences.
- Offer activities that are enjoyable and meaningful for the person.
- Maintain the person's privacy to ensure their dignity.
- Organise family, friends and staff to visit.
- Explain to family and friends that the person is not in control of their behaviour.

### Working together

You, your family and friends are important members of the care team who understand the person living with dementia best.

By working together with staff to share information helps to develop a care plan that is centred on the person. Understanding what triggers the person's behaviour can help reduce it.

Talk to staff and ask questions about caring for someone with dementia.

### Questions to ask staff

- Have you checked for pain, illness, or infection?
- Is there a behaviour support plan in place to help staff when the person is being disinhibited?
- Is there a dementia specialist available to be involved in care planning?



## Want to know more?

Read the Dementia Australia [disinhibited behaviour factsheet](https://www.dementia.org.au/sites/default/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-ChangedBehaviours10-DisinhibitedBehaviours_english.pdf) <[https://www.dementia.org.au/sites/default/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-ChangedBehaviours10-DisinhibitedBehaviours\\_english.pdf](https://www.dementia.org.au/sites/default/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-ChangedBehaviours10-DisinhibitedBehaviours_english.pdf)>.

For expert advice and support contact National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**. The helpline is free, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

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Available from the [Department of Health residential aged care information web page](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/residential-aged-care/participating-with-consumers)

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