


# **Effectively Coping with Mood and Behavioral Symptoms Related to Alzheimer's Disease**

**Presented by**

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**TEXAS**<sup>™</sup>  
  
THE STATE OF MIND

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# Alzheimer's Texas

A privately funded voluntary health organization formed in 1982 to serve Central Texans with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers.

## MISSION

To eliminate Alzheimer's disease and related disorders through the advancement of research and to enhance care and support for individuals, their families, and caregivers.

## VISION

To create and sustain a dementia capable Texas in which persons with Alzheimer's and related disorders, and their families, receive quality care, effective treatments, and meaningful support.



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# Learning Objectives

- To better understand common mood and behavioral symptoms associated with Alzheimer's Disease, their etiology, and impact.
- To learn about a practical approach to effectively coping with Alzheimer's Disease mood and behavioral symptoms
- To learn about other evidence-based strategies to treat mood and behavioral symptoms related to this disease process.



# Common Psychological and Behavioral Symptoms

Psychological Symptomatology	Behavioral Symptomatology
Anger/Frustration	Wandering
Anxiety	Agitation/Aggressive Behavior
Depression/Sadness	Using Foul language/Yelling
Delusions	Tearfulness/Crying
Mood swings	Eating Difficulties
Apathy	Sleep Disturbance
Mania	Impulsiveness
Irritability	Inappropriate Sexual Behavior
Personality Changes	Refusing Help
Paranoia	Hoarding
Aggressiveness	Accusations
Hallucinations	Incontinence

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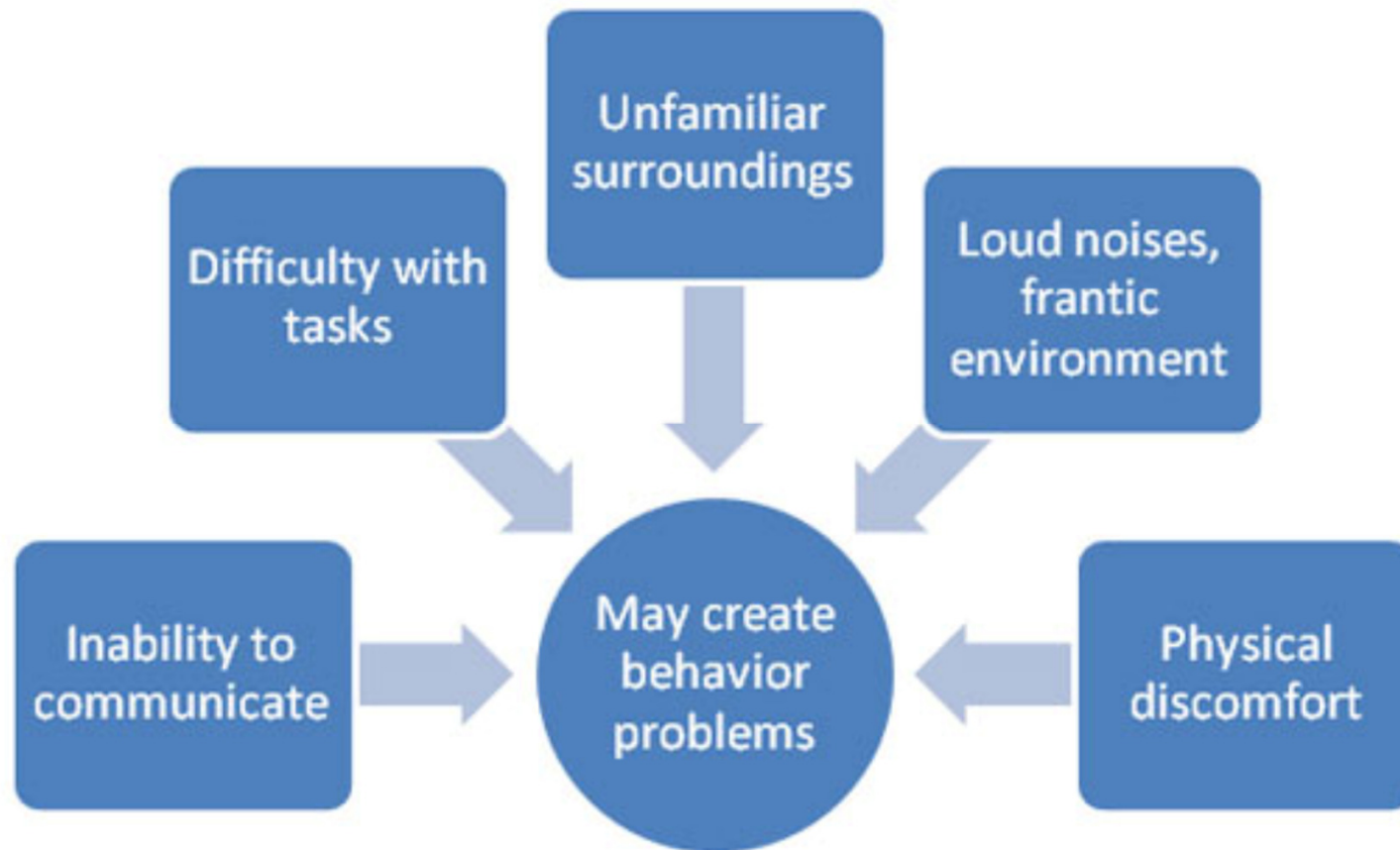
# Why Do These Symptoms Occur?

## Physiological Causes:

- **Neurons (nerve cells) are being lost in the brain due to plaques and tangles**
- **Mood and Behavioral changes depend on which part of the brain is being impacted by these losses**
- **Other physiological causes:**
  - Pain
  - Infection
  - Metabolic Changes
  - Medication side effects
  - Another cooccurring change in health or incident: stroke, cancer, fecal impaction, etc.



## Secondary/Environmental Causes



<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/alzheimers-dementia-aging/alzheimers-behavior-management.htm>

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# How are patients and caregivers impacted?

*“Disruptive behaviors are more disturbing partly because of the adverse impact on the emotional connection between the caregiver and the care-recipient and partly because they exacerbate difficulties in other domains (e.g., caring for activities of daily living).”*

*Cheng (2017)*

*A recent meta-analysis found overall prevalence rates of 34 and 44%, respectively, of elevated depressive and anxiety symptoms for caregivers.*

*Sallim et al. (2015)*

A recent longitudinal study found incidence rates of 37 and 55% for major depressive and anxiety disorders in a 24-month interval for caregivers.

*Joling et al. (2015)*

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# Practical Strategies for Caregivers

## 7 Steps to Managing Mood and Behavioral Symptoms

- Reassure the person
- Review the possible causes
- Remove any triggers
- Redirect behavior or attention
- Restore yourself
- Review what happened
- Reach out for help as needed



*Surviving Alzheimer's:  
Practical Tips and Soul-  
Saving Wisdom for  
Caregivers –  
Paula Spencer Scott*

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## Reassure the Person:

- Collect and calm yourself.
- Use body language that matches your words: Approach slowly and from the front. Be aware of your body language and movement and make eye contact.
- Avoid urging or arguing. Stop yourself from reacting with logic.
- Respond to the emotion being expressed, rather than the behavior.
- Validate the emotion.
- Take time to really connect with the person you're caring for.
- Remind the person that they are safe, and you are there to help.



## Review the Possible Causes:

- ✓ Consider the timing.
- ✓ Ask yourself if there's a pattern to when or where the problem seems to happen
- ✓ Make a mental sweep of what's new/different that might have set the person off.
- ✓ **Consider possible unmet needs:**
  - ☐ Physical need: Hunger, sleep, etc.
  - ☐ Pain
  - ☐ Another physical cause: constipation, dehydration
  - ☐ Overstimulation
  - ☐ Frustration
  - ☐ Feeling unsafe or insecure
- ✓ Assess the person's body language.
- ✓ What happened just before the behavioral or emotional response?
- ✓ How did I initially react to the behavior or emotional response?
- ✓ Ask the person questions that show you're on their side and to better understand the problem.



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## Remove Any Triggers:

- Visual triggers: car keys, coat by the door
- Auditory triggers: unidentifiable sounds, loud noises
- Activity triggers: sounds of meal prep or the lawnmower
- Misperception triggers: shadows as people; perceiving a known visitor as a stranger
- Discomfort triggers: hunger, feeling too hot or cold
- Frustration triggers: Identify validating narratives, “We stored your tools in the garage so they wouldn’t get rained on.”

### WHAT TRIGGERED ME

- |                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. I felt excluded.            | 13. I felt like the bad guy.   |
| 2. I felt powerless.           | 14. I felt forgotten.          |
| 3. I felt unheard.             | 15. I felt unsafe.             |
| 4. I felt scolded.             | 16. I felt unloved.            |
| 5. I felt judged.              | 17. I felt like it was unfair. |
| 6. I felt blamed.              | 18. I felt frustrated.         |
| 7. I felt disrespected.        | 19. I felt disconnected.       |
| 8. I felt a lack of affection. | 20. I felt trapped.            |
| 9. I felt I couldn't speak up. | 21. I felt a lack of passion.  |
| 10. I felt lonely.             | 22. I felt uncared for.        |
| 11. I felt ignored.            | 23. I felt manipulated.        |

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## Redirect Behavior or Attention:

- Introduce a diversion.
- Provide options when possible.
- Change the scenery.
- Utilize peacefully distracting and safe activities: “Fold laundry, watering a plant”
- Use bridge phrases to change the topic of conversation.
- Steer toward a positive aspect of the past, reminisce.
- Break down complex tasks into smaller manageable steps
- Give the person a task that allows them to have a say in what is happening
- Exercise is one of the best stress-relievers for everyone: take a walk
- Play calming or favorite music.
- Interact with a pet or special loved one in the home
- Speak slowly, with a calm tone. Avoid quick movements that could be misunderstood.
- Move to a quieter area.
- Give brief and simple directions/Ask simple, close-ended questions. Say one thing at a time.
- Pause or back off when something isn't working.
- Have a daily routine, so the person knows when certain things will happen.



## Restore Yourself/Restore the Caregiver:

- Give yourself a moment: Deep Breathing, Mindfulness
- Practice Self Compassion and giving yourself credit
- Take a break, if possible
- Make plans to de-stress – “This evening I will need to . . .”
- Access respite care or your social support system. Who can you call?
- Make sure your basic needs are met. Did you eat lunch?



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## Review what happened, when you are able:

- Keep a written or electronic log of incidents: time, date, severity
- Consider any recent changes to routine, medication, etc.
- What other symptoms have been present, if any? increased lethargy, physical agitation, etc.
- Consult with others who might have witnessed the behavior: Home health, hospice, other family members.



<https://zapier.com/blog/best-journaling-apps/>

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## Reach Out for More Help:

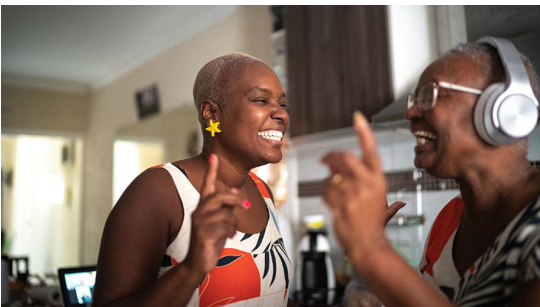
- Consult with any other personal or professional caregivers involved in the person's care.
- Reach out to a primary care physician if symptoms persist.
- Join virtual communities for dementia caregivers.
- Local Alzheimer's support groups, such as those offered by many of you through Alzheimer's TX.
- Consultations with a dementia-care expert, like a geriatric care manager.
- Take a course or workshop.
- Review books and materials about dementia care.





# Non-pharmacological Interventions

- Sensory Stimulation Interventions
- Cognitive/Emotion-Oriented Interventions
- Other Evidence Based Interventions
  - Exercise Therapy
  - Animal Assisted Therapy
  - Tailored Dining Room Environment



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# Sensory Stimulation Interventions

- Shiatsu and Acupuncture
- Aromatherapy
- Massage Therapy
- Light Therapy
- Sensory Garden and Horticultural Activities
- Music, dance, and art therapy
- Snoezelen Multisensory Stimulation Therapy





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# Cognitive/Emotion-Oriented Interventions

- Cognitive stimulation
- Reminiscence Therapy/Life Review
- Validation Therapy
- Behavioral Management Techniques:
  - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
  - Functional analysis of specific behavior
  - Behavioral Reinforcement Strategies
  - Communication Training
  - Habit Training
  - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
  - Token Economies





# Other Evidence Based Interventions

- ❖ Exercise Therapy
- ❖ Animal Assisted Therapy
- ❖ Tailored Dining Room Environment



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# One Example of Art Therapy

Creativity and theater in a skilled nursing setting. . .

*The Royal Papers, West Oaks Rehab Residents*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAqCRe41i0w>



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# Alzheimer's Texas

- Information and Referral
- Resource lists
- Care Consultations
- Early Stage resources
- Support groups for caregivers
- Respite programs
- Education and training
- Monthly E-Newsletter
- Lending Library
- Advocacy
- Support for Research



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**For a personalized consultation, call:**

**512-241-0420**

**Or visit us at:**

**[www.txalz.org](http://www.txalz.org)**

**[txprograms@txalz.org](mailto:txprograms@txalz.org)**

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Questions?

What do you want us to know?

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