

Carers of people with dementia frequently ask similar questions. This information sheet gives possible explanations and guidelines, which may be helpful when caring for a person with dementia.

- A person with dementia might succeed in doing things and remembering things better at some times than others. This is not because the person with dementia is being difficult, but may be because they are tired, or feeling unwell. It is also quite usual for people to fluctuate slightly in their abilities due to just having a good day or a bad day – not unlike ourselves.
- When a person with dementia tells stories, which are not factual, they are not telling lies, but making sense of their muddled world.
- Sometimes a person with dementia might feel sad or angry but not remember why, and so it is of no use keep asking them what the problems are – it is helpful to validate their feelings such as saying ‘you look really sad about something’.
- When a person with dementia keeps asking the same question over and over again, it helps to divert their attention to another subject. As the long-term memory is often preserved for longer, it may help to talk about something in the past.
- When a person with dementia starts to get agitated, for instance ‘I’m not going to day care’, there is no point in arguing, it just gets both the person and the carer upset. Change the subject and go back to it later.
- When a person with dementia wants to leave home to go back to Mum, it is cruel and useless to say ‘she died 30 years ago’. Instead validate their feelings, perhaps saying that you can see they are upset, and talking about what Mum was like, giving comfort at the same time.
- There is no point in constantly correcting the person with dementia. This will make them lose their confidence, and eventually stop trying to say or do anything.
- When a person with dementia won’t change their clothes, try substituting clean clothes for the dirty ones, whilst the person is getting washed.
- Encourage the person with dementia to do as much as possible for themselves, and take part in household activities such as dusting or drying up, even if they don’t do it very well.
- Carers must think of him or herself as well as the person with dementia, they must take care of themselves.