



WHAT TO DO WHEN A MEMORY CARE RESIDENT WANTS TO GO HOME

It's not uncommon for residents with Alzheimer's disease to express a desire to go "home." It can be difficult to understand whether "home" to them is a beloved childhood house, a time from their past life, or a place among the people they used to know. Here are some things you can do when your resident says they'd like to go home.

LET THEM KNOW YOU'RE LISTENING: Let your resident know that you understand what they're saying and that you empathize with how they're feeling. Speak to them in a calm tone, which they may pick up on. It may even lead to them calming down as well.

VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS: Agree with what your resident tells you so they know that their feelings are acknowledged and important. This might include you telling them that, "Yes, we can go home," or praising their ideas and suggesting, "Maybe we could try that sometime."

REASSURE THEM: In a relaxed tone, let your resident know everything will be OK, and sit with them for a while. If they like physical contact, give them a hug, hold their hand, or gently brush their arm. Because your resident is really longing for comfort, this can help soothe any anxiety they may be experiencing.

REMINISCE WITH THEM: Asking about their home validates their feelings, encourages them to share positive memories, and distracts them from their original goal of going home. Open questions that encourage them to share their thoughts work well. For example: "Your home sounds lovely, tell me more about it" or "What is your favorite room of the house?" After a while, guide the conversation to another topic.

DISTRACT WITH A FUN ACTIVITY: After validating what they have to say, move seamlessly onto something else in order to redirect their attention and try to distract them with another activity. Redirection should lead into pleasant and distracting activities that take their minds away from wanting to go home.

GO ALONG WITH THEIR LOGIC: Avoid trying to use reason with your resident, as this will likely make them more agitated. Because of the nature of Alzheimer's, they will struggle to process what you're trying to explain, and instead will only see you as getting in their way. Go along with their logic as best you can.

TRY A COMFORT OBJECT: Sometimes residents may find comfort in objects, something that has a bit of home in it. It could be something they can cuddle with, like a favorite blanket or a stuffed animal. Have these comfort objects nearby and see if they can serve as a source of relief.

LOOK AT A PHOTO ALBUM: A photo album can also be useful, and may help instill a sense of recognition. While looking at the photos, maybe you can ask your resident to tell you more about their home. Even if they have trouble recognizing the photos, the pictures can serve as a distraction, and may still help your resident cope.

Aegis Homecare & Hospice offers many educational in-services for senior living staff on Alzheimer's and various other topics. Call 480-219-4790 for additional information.