

Australian version

# iSupport For Dementia

Training and support manual  
for carers of people with dementia



## Unit 5. How to avoid conversations that may trigger changed behaviour

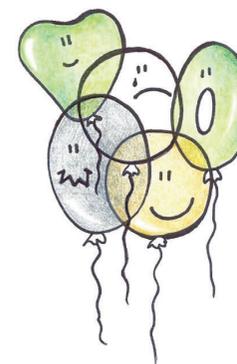
Changed behaviour of the person with dementia can be triggered by the carer through everyday conversations.

### Why is this learning unit important?

If a person with dementia demonstrates changed behaviour, it can be stressful for the person and the carer. Understanding how to avoid conversations that may trigger changed behaviour can help carers cope.

### How will this learning unit help me?

This learning unit will help you to understand why this happens and how to respond and reduce it.



## Memory loss that triggers changed behaviour

Kayla has dementia. Her husband, Howard, is taking care of her.

Howard often asks Kayla if she can remember who came to visit last week or what she had for dinner yesterday.

Kayla cannot remember these things and becomes very angry and yells when Howard questions her.

As a result, Howard feels frustrated and yells back at Kayla.



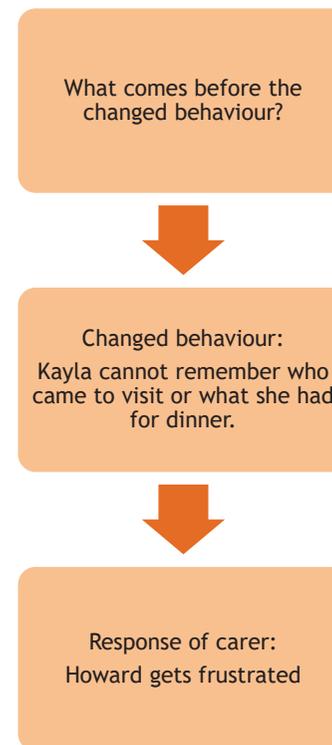
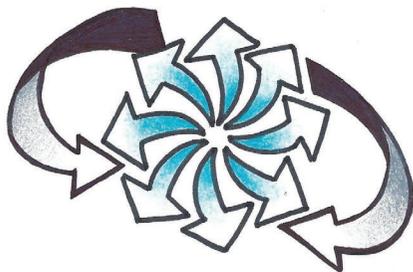
## What comes before the changed behaviour?

The three boxes show what's happening:

What comes before the changed behaviour?

Why is it important to examine what comes before the changed behaviour?

Sometimes you can reduce or even prevent changed behaviour. If you pay attention and figure out what comes before the behaviour, this can help you to reduce or prevent the changed behaviour.



### Let us analyse Kayla's situation:

- Howard asks questions Kayla cannot answer
- The tone Howard asks these questions makes Kayla feel nervous.

#### 1. Activity

Now you try the next one. Please fill in your ideas on what comes before Kayla's changed behaviour.

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### Check your understanding

*What are some of the things Howard could do differently?*

Here are some responses, some are good, others are not. Please indicate what you think could be good responses. Howard could:

- Show that he is frustrated.
- Take a deep breath.
- Remind himself that his wife has dementia and cannot answer these questions he asks. She is not forgetting on purpose.
- Remember next time that asking Kayla such questions might lead to frustration for himself and also upset his wife.
- Work with Kayla to record significant family and social events in a family diary.

## ANSWERS - How to avoid conversations that may trigger changed behaviour

## Check your understanding

*Let's look at your answer*

- ✗ **Show that he is frustrated.**  
Showing that he is frustrated may even make the behaviour of the person with dementia worse.
- ✓ **Take a deep breath.**  
It shows that Howard is trying to calm down, if he calms down Kayla might too.
- ✓ **Remind himself that his wife has dementia and cannot answer these questions he asks. She is not forgetting on purpose.**  
Howard recognises that Kayla is living with dementia.
- ✓ **Remember next time that asking Kayla such questions might lead to frustration for himself and also upset his wife.**  
This is a good response, because it may prevent this frustrating situation.
- ✓ **Work with Kayla to record significant family and social events in a family diary.**  
This is a good response, because they can revisit the events together to have a sense of being loved by family members and friends.

### Activity



#### Now relate to your own situation

It is important to relate what you just have learnt to your own situation with the person you care for. These boxes can be used like a diary by you to keep records that may help you in the future.

What were the most changed situations you experienced as a carer in the last month?

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What could you do differently to prevent these changed situations?

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### Keep in Mind



#### Let's review what you have learned

- People with dementia have memory loss.
- It is helpful to identify how you usually respond: what you feel or what you do.
- Take a deep breath and think about the best ways to respond to situations that will be the least distressing for you and the person you care for.
- Try different responses and approaches, as the first one does not always work.
- Look after yourself during and after challenging situations and, if necessary, seek support from someone you trust to talk about the incident.

### RELATED LEARNING UNITS

- Module 2 Unit 1 The journey together
- Module 3 Unit 1 Reducing stress in everyday life
- Module 5 Unit 6 Walking and getting lost

### Additional resources

Dementia Australia, <https://www.dementia.org.au/>

The National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500 is open nationally from 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday excluding public holidays. A message service is available if you call outside operating hours.

Dementia Support Australia, <https://www.dementia.com.au/>

The Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service (DBMAS) offers people with dementia and their carers support in managing behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia, such as wandering and aggression. Contact them on 1800 699 799 (24 hours a day).

My Aged Care <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au>

Carer support groups can sometimes be organised around specific caring roles and the situation of the person you care for. For information about these groups in your area visit the website or call My Aged Care on 1800 200 422.



You finished this unit, well done!