

THE DAILY PRACTICAL · FREE COMPANION TOOL

When everything is a battle

You cannot win an argument with a disease — and every time you try, you both lose. This is the pattern that works when logic doesn't: meet the feeling, not the facts. Here is the one move that changes everything, and the words for the moments that break your heart the most.

The one rule underneath all of it

Don't argue. Don't correct. Don't quiz. Their brain can't travel back to your reality — so for a moment, you step into theirs. **Agree with the feeling, then gently redirect.** You are not lying to them. You are choosing their comfort over being right.

1

"I want to go home" — when they *are* home

THE FEELING: UNMOORED, UNSAFE

"Home" usually isn't a place — it's a time when they felt safe and in control. Arguing the address only frightens them more.

Try: "Tell me about home. What's your favorite room?" Let them talk. Then offer comfort and a small next thing: "Let's have some tea first, then we'll see."

2

The same question, again and again

THE FEELING: ANXIETY, NOT CURIOSITY

They aren't forgetting to annoy you. The repetition is anxiety looking for reassurance it can't hold onto.

Try: answer the *feeling*, not the question — "You're safe, I've got everything handled." A note in their handwriting on the table can quiet the loop. Then redirect to something for their hands.

3

"No." The refusal loop

THE FEELING: LOSS OF CONTROL

When everything is decided for you, "no" is the last power you have. Pushing harder makes it dig in.

Try: drop it and come back in ten minutes as if it's new. Offer two yeses, not a yes/no: "Blue shirt or the green one?" And if they still say no to you, sometimes a different person asking gets a different answer.

Where Quality of Life Counts

Educational information from Senior Advocators Inc. It is not medical advice. Sudden or severe behavior changes can have a medical cause — contact their physician.

4

Fighting the bath

THE FEELING: COLD, FEAR, EXPOSURE

Bathing can feel frightening and undignified — being cold, being seen, water they can't predict. It's rarely about being clean.

Try: warm the room first. Never announce "you need a bath." Break it into small steps, keep them covered, keep your voice easy. A washcloth day is still a win.

5

They won't eat

THE FEELING: OVERWHELMED, OR IN PAIN

A full plate can overwhelm. So can a sore tooth they can't tell you about, or a medication that killed their appetite.

Try: one food at a time, finger foods they can manage, their favorites without guilt about nutrition today. If it persists, ask the doctor to check for pain, swallowing, or dental issues.

6

"You stole my —" anger and accusation

THE FEELING: TERROR OF LOSING CONTROL

When you can't find something and can't remember where it went, someone must have taken it. The accusation is fear, not malice — and defending yourself pours gas on it.

Try: don't defend. "That's so upsetting — let's look together." Join the search, "find" it or redirect, and let it go. Keep a spare of the things that vanish most.

The line where technique stops

If they are ever a danger to themselves or to you, that is not a moment for a script — it's a call to their doctor, or in a crisis, to 911. A sudden change in behavior is often a medical event (an infection, pain, a new medication), not "the dementia getting worse." Get it checked.

When the behavior that scares you won't respond

Some behaviors need more than a playbook — they need eyes on your specific situation. **A consultation with Ginell Butler, MAASM, MSA** helps you build a plan for the ones that are wearing you down. senioradvocators.org

Where Quality of Life Counts

Educational information from Senior Advocators Inc. It is not medical advice. Sudden or severe behavior changes can have a medical cause — contact their physician.