

# What to Say to Respond to Hallucinations

## Hallucination Response Framework:

1. Is your person with dementia distressed or calm?
2. Are they asking for your help or asking you to acknowledge their hallucination?
3. What would bring them peace in that moment?

## What Doesn't Work:

1. Showing evidence
2. Saying you don't see/hear what they are seeing/hearing
3. Using logic/too many words
4. Telling them there is nothing there
5. Telling them to "cut it out"

## What to say instead:

1. Repeat back what they are seeing so they know you understand "You're seeing bugs?"
2. Assure them you're "Taking care of it"
3. Invite them to be part of the solution as an activity. "Let's take care of this."

# What to Say to Respond to Hallucinations

## 1. HALLUCINATION EXAMPLE: BUGS

Example: Dad is seeing bugs on his bedroom floor and is yelling out that there are bugs on the ground.

Let's use to framework first:

1. Is your person with dementia distressed or calm?

He is distressed

2. Are they asking for your help or asking you to acknowledge their hallucination?

Yes he is asking you to acknowledge their hallucination and for help.

3. What would bring them peace in that moment?

Helping him feel like the "bugs" are being taken care of would bring him peace.

What to say based on what we know:

"You see bugs Dad? Don't worry, we'll take care of it."

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## 2. HALLUCINATIONS: DOGS

Example: Mom is talking to an invisible dog in the corner and pleasantly telling you details about the dog.

Let's use to framework first:

1. Is your person with dementia distressed or calm?

No, she is not distressed.

2. Are they asking for your help or asking you to acknowledge their hallucination?

No she isn't asking for help.

3. What would bring them peace in that moment?

Not getting into a battle of what is and isn't there

What to say based on what we know:

Nothing. If she isn't upset, scared or in danger there isn't any harm in letting her be.

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## 3. HALLUCINATION: INTRUDER

Example: Your client Barbara sees her coat hanger in her dark room and yells out "Intruder!!!"

Let's use to framework first:

1. Is your person with dementia distressed or calm?

She is distressed

2. Are they asking for your help or asking you to acknowledge their hallucination?

Yes she is asking you to acknowledge their hallucination and for help.

3. What would bring them peace in that moment?

Helping her feel like the intruder is gone and she is safe.

What to say based on what we know:

"Don't worry Barbara, we'll make sure you are safe." OR You take away the coat hanger and say "Don't worry, we got him."