

What to Say for Repeating Behaviors Cheatsheet

3 Things Not to Do with Repeating Behaviors

1. Ignore them
2. Tell them to stop
3. Yell at them

Top 3 Most Common Reasons for Repeating Behaviors

- 1) Comfort or as a way to self soothe
- 2) Communication in the absence of words, most often of their anxiety or unmet physical needs
- 3) Giving themselves something to do, or an expression of boredom

1. WHAT TO SAY FOR COMFORT OR TO SELF-SOOTHE:

a) First, how you figure out if this is why they are repeating the same phrase is observe if:

- This is something they do when right after being stressed out or tired
- Their facial expression and body is more relaxed when they are engaging in the behavior or phrase.

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b) If they are repeating a phrase over and over or keeps making noises with their mouth here are some things you can say:

- Simply starting singing a familiar song you know they like
- "Sing this with me" Then start singing a few words of the song
- "Do you know x song?" Then start singing a few words
- Make it a game where you repeat back to them and see how they respond. Life is too short not to have some fun

c) If they are doing a repetitive movement like tapping their hands, you can say:

"You're really good at x, help me with x (chore, task, activity that uses their hands or body part they have been using)?"

- "Here, hold this for me?" while handing them a familiar/comforting object to hold
- "Join me outside? (or somewhere that is familiar to them)"
- "Let's do (familiar chore, task, activity that uses their hands or body part they have been using) together"
- "Could you show me how to do (familiar chore, task or activity that uses their hands or body part they have been using.)?"

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2. WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY ARE TRYING TO COMMUNICATE

a) If your person with dementia has some unmet physical needs you can say:

"Are you thirsty?"

"Are you tired?"

"Are you hungry?"

"Are you cold?"

but never more than 2-3 options at a time. If you have asked them all of these with no answer, simply hand them water, a blanket etc if they are too overwhelmed and see if the behavior stops.

b) If they are repeating the same question or comment like "Where is my daughter?" or "I want to go home" here is the outline to what you would say

Scenario 1:

Step 1: "Your daughter is at work, she left you a note." *hands note*

"Your daughter is at work, she made you a video explaining, let's watch it."

"Your daughter is at work. She said we could call to check in at 12. That is in 30 minutes."

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Step 2:

"Your daughter left us a list of things to help her while she's gone. Let's do some, it'll help her out a lot"

"Until then, I could use some help in the kitchen. Come with me?"

Senario 2:

Step 1:

"Is there something at home that you need or do you just want to be there?"

Based on their answer you either meet the need or give an excuse that makes sense again based on the answer they gave

Step 2:

"Ok, your husband is watching the kids at home. We were actually going to get some food, I bet the kids would like some for you to bring to them."

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3. WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY ARE BORED OR UNDERSTIMULATED

a) Giving themselves something to do, or an expression of boredom, similar to the last one, here are some things you can say:

- "You're really good at x, help me with x (chore, task, activity)?"
- "Join me outside?"
- "Let's do (familiar chore,task,activity) together"
- "Could you show me how to do (familiar chore, task or activity)?"

b) For this one as well, you can choose more leisure activities like crafts, music, games, cards etc since the reason they are engaging in the challenging behavior is seeking amusement.