

What to Say for Refusals

Cheatsheet

3 Things Not to Do with Refusals

1. Show evidence
2. Use logic or reason
3. Force them to do it anyways

Top 5 Most Common Reasons for Refusals

- 1) Physical issue
- 2) Way to gain back control
- 3) Forgetting steps of a task or getting confused
- 4) Not wanting to bother you or they want independence
- 5) Privacy

1. WHAT TO SAY FOR PHYSICAL ISSUES:

- a) Make sure you don't ask more than 2-3 questions at a time
 - b) Give them 30 seconds to a minute to answer a question
 - c) If the words are too much, give them water, lead them to bed, etc.
- "Does it hurt when you eat, walk, dress, shower etc?"
 - "Does it feel weird in your mouth?"
 - "Are you tired, hot thirsty etc?"

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2. WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY WANT CONTROL

1. If you know someone or something that is important to them, make that task a stepping stone to getting what they want. That way, they feel like they are making the decision.

- "We can't eat dinner without being washed up right? Let's wash up real quick so we can eat."
- "Your granddaughter loves to see you looking your best. Why don't we clean ourselves off real quick so we can see her."

2. Tell them "Ok", and ask again in 15-30 minutes or ask them "Let's try again in 30 minutes (or later)."

3. WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY ARE FORGETTING STEPS (GETTING CONFUSED)

1. Keep your instructions simple

2. Break down steps in more detail than you think you need to

- Instead of saying "Now, wash your hair"
- Say "Pick up the shampoo, put it in your hand, put your hand in your hair, move it around, rinse"

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4. WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY WANT MORE INDEPENDENCE (DOESN'T WANT TO BOTHER YOU)

1. Break down the task into small steps
 2. See what steps they still have the ability to do
 3. Ask if they can "help" with that part of the task
- Asking for "help", "advice", "suggestions", or "supervision" are all great for this person
 - "I know you got this, why don't we do this together in case I need help?"

5. WHAT TO SAY WHEN THEY WANT PRIVACY

1. Ask them if they would prefer someone of the same gender helping them.
 2. Offer to hold up a towel over sensitive areas and see if they will agree to your help under those conditions.
- "Let's keep you modest, I'll hold this up"

And last but not least...

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6. MODEL YOUR APPROACH AFTER AN EXPERT

CNAs, nurses, and dementia specialists deal with refusals all the time & the most experienced ones make getting a “yes” look easy.

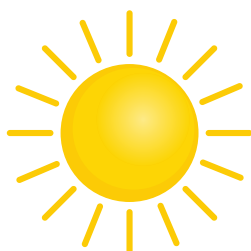
To see this cheatsheet played out LIVE (and ask your questions), don't miss our September 2025 workshop:

How To Stop The 4 Most Common Challenging Dementia Behaviors

Free 3 Day Workshop - Coming September 2025

Watch for email invite or check
dementiasuccesspath.com in September to sign up!

"I Want to Go Home"



Sundowning



Accusations

Refusals

