

## 5 Helpful Tips when *Dealing with Surprising Behaviour*

### 1. STEP BACK

When an interaction is not going well, you have a choice—you can push your agenda and watch things get worse OR you can step back and THINK. In your effort to be helpful you may have created a problem. Stop judging THEM. The person who is challenging you is doing the *very best* they can.

You need to be a really good DETECTIVE. Your brain works better than theirs, so USE it! Step back and assess their abilities. Try to figure out what might be driving their behaviour—what are you SEEING, what are you HEARING? What might be their EMOTIONAL need? Their PHYSICAL need? What are they trying to communicate? You need to see it from their point of view.

### 2. RESPOND (DON'T REACT)

What you thought would happen didn't happen. The person did not react the way you wanted or expected them to. You're getting FRUSTRATED and you're getting angry. **What to do?**

**Stop reacting:** STOP trying to correct, stop pointing out “errors”, stop trying to fix things. Stop raising your voice, stop pushing, stop saying “Remember, I already told you.” Don't argue with them. You have to get out of that mode!

DO use the words they have given you. It's called reflective narrative language. Repeat back to them what they have said to you— ACKNOWLEDGE and validate what they are feeling.

It is not about right and wrong. You may have to apologize: “I'm sorry, you're right.”

### 3. MAKE PLANS—BUT EXPECT THE PLANS MAY CHANGE

Create a plan, think it through, get organized. You know what you want to happen, **but** you have to be FLEXIBLE. If your plan isn't working, you can't force it! It's part of *your* agenda. Have alternatives ready: Plan B, Plan C and Plan D.

Be willing to adjust... *it was just a plan!* Figure out where to go from here.

### 4. FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU CAN/CAN'T CONTROL

Stop trying to control what you can't...you *can't* control their dementia or their past (who they've been and what they like). You *can't* control/fix/change their behaviour.

You *can* control their physical and sensory environment - the objects they use and how they spend their time. **Pay attention** – what makes them feel valued and important? When do they relax and build energy? What is the most important thing that needs to be done? How will they spend their day?

You *can* figure out how to *get yourself under control*— you *can* build your SKILLS and knowledge to do the right thing. Change what you can change. Let go of the rest.

## 5. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

When something you tried to do didn't work, when you're getting frustrated or angry, you need to take a TIME OUT. When you are frustrated, angry, or in despair, the person you are caring for picks up on it and will react to your stress level. That's when you're no good to them or to yourself.

**Step out of the situation.** Take at least 3 deep breaths—breathe in and out, deeply! BREATHING DEEPLY will help you get back to neutral, lower your emotional level, and help you regain perspective.

Don't hesitate to ask for help. This is hard work.