

Behavior Changes

Some of the possible behavioral changes of older adults, reasons for the behavior and possible solutions or interventions.

Behavioral Change	Possible Reasons	Some Solutions
1. Does not want to bathe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of sense of smell. • Change in body temperature. • Fear of falling in shower. • Cannot get into the tub. • May not care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an occasion to clean up. • Install handgrips or bathtub seat. • Be tactful but honest about the problem and discuss it.
2. Wears the same clothes over and over.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of sense of smell. • Too much routine without occasions or need to dress differently. • Clothes may be comfortable or associated with eventful memories. • No new clothes that fit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide occasions to wear different outfits. • Compliment on appearance and apparel. • Give new clothes as presents after asking what the person would like. • Show real interest in the person.
3. Closes all the drapes and blinds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As vision decreases, individual notices fewer things. • The house may look clean to the person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest a visit to the eye doctor. • Sunglasses or visor cap may help. • Understand the problem.
4. Cannot sleep at night/wanders/keeps the lights on.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not able to have a deep sleep. • May not feel exhausted at the end of the boring day. • May fear falling in the dark, being alone, or dying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan more daytime activities with the person. • Provide a night-light to guide the way to the bathroom. • Encourage the person or join them in relaxing before retiring. • Increase daytime walking or other exercise.

<p>5. Talks about getting married.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loneliness. • Need for companionship. • Need for sexual activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real companionship 24 hours a day for those who want it.
<p>6. Drinks constantly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loneliness. • Grief. • Depressed reaction to changes. • Stressful situation. • May be an alcoholic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk honestly about concern when the person <i>has not</i> been drinking. • Suggest &/or provide social activities. • Listen. • Suggest counseling, help from Alcoholics Anonymous, and/or a minister. • Make a change in scenery or situation.
<p>7. Repeats same statements and stories.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not hear well enough to participate in a conversation. • Does not remember or realize the repetition. • The statement or story makes a point and communicates what the person wants to say. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate hearing loss and make special efforts to include the person in conversations. • Listen for the point of the story statement. • May reflect anxiety, good self-esteem, or the importance of former activities. • Be reassuring. • Build self-esteem. • Encourage important activities in the present. • Be understanding. • Do not argue. • Re-direct or distract to another conversation or activity.

Adapted from As People Grow Older, Jane Oderberg, & Sue Smith, 1995.