

ST21 - WORKING WITH COMBATIVE RESIDENTS



Background

Residents, especially those with dementia, may at times become agitated and combative. They may strike out, grab, kick, or even bite caregivers and other employees. To maintain the safety of employees, as well as the safety and dignity of residents, it is imperative to de-escalate combative situations quickly.

Know Your Residents

Knowing your residents is key to calming combative residents:

- What triggers agitation and combativeness?
- How do they react when agitated?
- What calms them down?



Formulate a Plan

When dealing with combative residents, think before you act if you want to help them return to a calm state. Once you've identified the trigger or cause of their agitation, remove it immediately. This could be as simple as turning down a television that disturbed them or taking them back to their rooms, where familiar items will make them feel comfortable and at home. Be empathetic, but retain your position of authority when interacting with residents. Don't feed into their outbursts by allowing your behavior to mirror theirs. Remain calm, collected and in control. By setting an example of appropriate behavior, you can bring residents up to your level and gain control of the situation. If you can't calm a resident on your own or think your physical safety or the safety of other residents is at risk, call for assistance, another CNA, a nurse or a doctor immediately.

Getting Back to Normal

The key to working combative residents through their agitation is to remain calm yourself. A soothing tone and demeanor will do far more to calm the resident than anything you say. Keep your body language open while maintaining your distance from the resident.

Should a combative resident grab you, step into them. This will generally allow you to gently break their hold on you, allowing you to step back to a safer distance.

Get into the resident's world and work with them to break the cycle of agitation. Reminding an agitated resident of something they don't recognize only serves to agitate them further. Break the cycle. Do something unexpected. Always validate their view and work with it to redirect their focus.

Document the Event

Most care facilities require CNAs to document all outbursts or otherwise out-of-the-ordinary encounters with residents. Take note of the time of the tantrum and report what happened from an unbiased point of view. Avoid inserting your opinion as well as exaggerating or downplaying the event. In order for the resident's doctor, case worker or family to make effective and educated decisions regarding the resident's care, they need the facts. Documenting the event will help identify patterns or regular triggers so you can keep stress to a minimum in the future.

Prevention and Modifying the Behavior

In order to keep your care facility a safe, nurturing place for residents and employees, try to prevent residents from becoming combative in the first place. If a resident has a reputation for hostility and you know what triggers it, keep her away from those triggers as soon as possible. Watch her behavior closely and intervene before she has the chance to become combative. For example, if you see her pacing and looking disoriented, don't wait for her to start yelling or crying before you act. Approach her immediately, remain calm and take her to a place where she feels safe and comfortable. In some instances, you can help residents learn to modify their behavior. For example, when a resident has calmed down after acting combative, tell her she can approach you when she feels uncomfortable and you'll help her deal with it. By being proactive and presenting yourself as a friend and mentor to residents, you become a person they can trust and go to when they feel agitated.