Shyrell Parker, Program Coordinator
Alzheimer's Services
PH: (225)408-3101

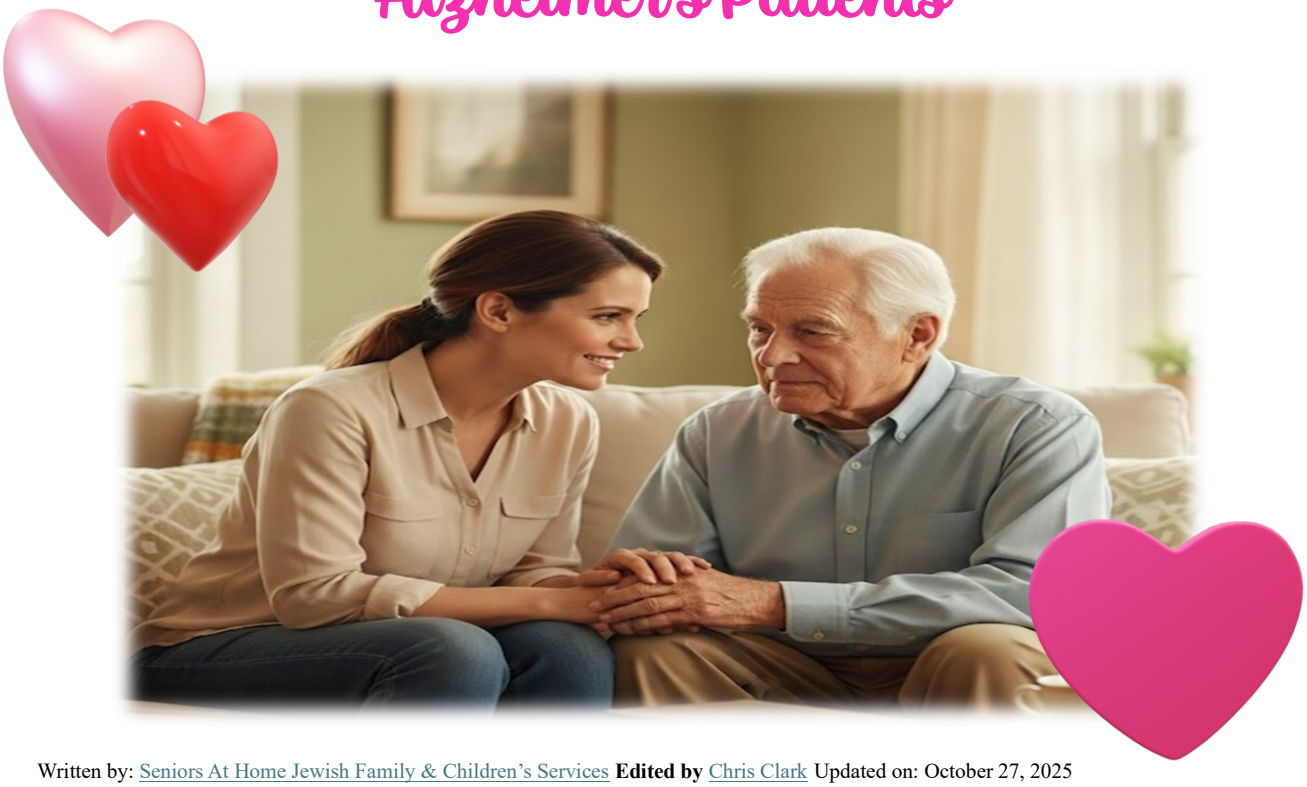
Care Partner Support Group Newsletter

Supporting Families. Empowering Caregivers

==========S. Parker===Program Coordinator

February 2026

How to Deal with Difficult Questions from Alzheimer's Patients



Written by: Seniors At Home Jewish Family & Children's Services **Edited by** Chris Clark Updated on: October 27, 2025

| When a loved one with Alzheimer's repeatedly asks, "When are we going home?" or "Where is my mother?" it can feel like a heartbreaking test. Your instinct to provide a logical, factual answer often leads to more confusion, frustration, or agitation for both of you.

These repetitive questions aren't about seeking information—they're a window into an underlying emotional need for comfort and security.

How to Deal With Difficult Questions from Alzheimer's Patients – DailyCaring
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Learning to respond with empathy rather than facts can transform these challenging moments into opportunities for connection and peace.

Here's How to Answer Difficult Questions from Seniors with Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease or dementia can cause seniors to get confused and forget key details about their lives. This might mean that your older adult asks sensitive questions that are difficult to answer.

The Center for Dementia Care at Seniors At Home, the in-home care division of Jewish Family and Children's Services, shares tips for what to say if you find yourself having one of these three tough conversations.

How to Respond to the Tough Questions from Alzheimer's Sufferers

1. How do I tell my mother, who has dementia, that a relative is dying or has passed away?

You should first consider whether knowing that will benefit your mom. What would she do with that information? Would she remember if you told her the truth? Or would she get upset, forget about it, and later ask, only to get upset all over again?

Depending on where someone is in the disease, giving them upsetting news may not be suitable for them or you. If they're still able to process and retain that information, you might want to tell them.

But if their short-term memory is poor and they get easily upset or scared, it will probably be better to avoid the subject or even tell a fib. That helps you avoid hurting them with information they can't fully understand.

Another thing to think about is whether sharing this news is really for them or if it's more for yourself. For many, it can be about easing the guilt of "withholding" information.

But when someone has dementia, you shouldn't feel guilty about ***not*** giving them news that will only upset or scare them.

They won't be able to work through their feelings the way you would, so not telling them is actually kinder and more appropriate for the situation.

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2. How should I respond to the painful emotional questions my mother repeatedly asks?

The best approach is to focus on the emotion behind the question, rather than the actual words she's using.

Avoid correcting, contradicting, or confronting her. Instead, consider joining her reality and meeting the needs she can't communicate.

For example, a person who asks about their mother (who is deceased) might be searching for someone or something to comfort them.

In this situation, offer a hug, a blanket, or a favorite snack. Gently encourage her to talk about what her mother looked like, felt like, and about conversations they had.

Another example is if someone with dementia constantly asks about your husband (who you divorced years ago).

You could give a generic answer like, "Fred? He's doing great." Then, calmly change the subject by saying, "There are so many great memories; let's look at some family photos." Get some family photos and look at their favorites – avoiding any with your ex-husband in them.

3. I don't understand what they're saying because it doesn't make any sense

The most important thing is to respond calmly, pleasantly, and positively to whatever he's saying.

Avoid quizzes or asking questions that require them to remember things – in fact, it's best to eliminate the word "remember" from your vocabulary entirely.

Instead, engage their other senses in the present moment.

Look through photos so they can reminisce without pressure, get engaged in a fun or soothing activity, try aromatherapy, give them a gentle massage, or listen to some favorite music.

Final Thoughts

Mastering this compassionate approach takes practice, but it ultimately transforms moments of distress into opportunities for meaningful connection. Remember, you're not lying or being condescending, you're meeting your loved one where they are and providing what they truly need: reassurance and emotional safety.

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By focusing on the feeling behind the question rather than the facts, you can reduce their anxiety and preserve the trust and bond your share. This shift in perspective is one of the most powerful tools you can use to navigate the communication challenges of dementia with grace and love.

Responding to Dementia Hallucinations in Seniors

Dementia causes changes in the brain that may cause someone to hallucinate – To see, hear, feel, or taste something that isn't there. Their brain is distorting or misinterpreting the senses. With any hallucination, what's most important is to validate your loved one's experience, respond to their feelings, and keep them safe.

We share 10 ways to respond when someone with dementia is experiencing hallucinations.

Dementia Can Cause Hallucinations

Even if it's not real, a hallucination can be very real to the person experiencing this sensation. For example, if your older adult sees bugs crawling on the floor, nothing you say will convince them that the bugs don't exist. Their brains are telling them that the bugs are real.

Some hallucinations can be scary, but others might involve visions of ordinary people, situations, or objects from the past. Some may even be pleasant or happy. These dementia hallucinations usually happen in the middle or later stages and are more common in Lewy Body and Parkinson's dementia.

But they can also happen in Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.

10 Ways to Respond When Someone is Experiencing Dementia Hallucinations

1. Determine if a response is needed

The first step is determining whether the hallucination is bothering your older adult. You might not want to respond or call attention if it's pleasant. Just know and accept that it's a dementia symptom and thankfully isn't causing distress.

If the hallucination is upsetting them or causing them to do something unsafe, it's time to quickly intervene to provide comfort or redirect them to a safe activity.

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2. Stay calm and don't argue with them

When someone is having dementia hallucination, it's essential to stay calm and avoid contradicting them. What they're seeing is a dementia symptom and is very real to them.

Trying to explain that it isn't real won't work because of the damage that dementia has caused in their brain. Knowing that you don't believe them might make them even more upset.

If they're calm enough to explain, it may also help to understand what they're seeing. Listen carefully and try to pick up clues.

However, keep in mind that dementia can damage the brain, potentially affecting the person's ability to use the correct words. For example, they could unintentionally say 'cabbages' when they mean 'green cushions.

3. Validate their feelings and provide reassurance

Be careful not to dismiss your older adult's experience. Brushing off what they see by saying something like, "Don't be silly, there's nothing there," will likely upset them.

It helps them talk about what they're seeing. Having you take them seriously and provide reassurance increases their feeling of safety and security.

Focus on being kind and responding to their feelings rather than the hallucination itself. If they're scared, you could say, "That sounds scary. I can see how upset you are." If they're happy, you might say, "How wonderful! I'm glad that makes you so happy."

Other possible responses could be, "It sounds like you're worried," or "I know this is scary for you." You don't need to pretend that you can see or hear what they can; just be supportive and do what you can to relieve any fear or anxiety as if it were a real threat.

For example, you could say," I don't hear or see anyone outside the window, but you seem worried. What can I do to help you feel safe? "

4. Check the environment and remove possible triggers

Oftentimes, dementia hallucinations can be triggered by things going on around an older adult.

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Their dementia brain can interpret sights and sounds differently, causing hallucinations.

To remove possible triggers, check their environment for background noise or visual stimulation that could cause a problem.

For example, things like TV or radio could make them believe that strangers are in the house, what's happening on TV is real, or that they're hearing voices.

Dim lighting could make shadowy corners a source of fear. Reflections in shiny floors or windows, when it's dark outside and bright inside, can make it seem like people are in the house. Similarly, mirrors can be another source of fear or confusion.

5. Offer simple answers and reassurances

When someone is having a dementia hallucination, don't give lengthy explanations about what's happening. Trying to process what you're saying may add to their distress. Instead, respond calmly and supportively.

You could say something like, "I'm here to protect you. I'll make sure you're safe. Everything is ok."

Gently hugging or patting their arm or shoulder may also provide the comfort and reassurance they need if they're scared or stressed. Connecting with you may also be a welcome distraction from the hallucination.

6. Look for patterns

If hallucinations happen frequently, there could be a trigger that's not obvious.

One way to determine what is causing the behavior is to track activities and look for a pattern. Taking notes or keeping a dementia journal may help you discover that certain hallucinations happen at a particular time of day, before or after meals, or are related to a physical need like using the bathroom or being in pain.

Or, it could be something as simple as a change in daily routine that's making them feel confused or disoriented and causing hallucinations.

Keeping a log or taking notes helps you look for solutions and ways to avoid the situations that may be triggering hallucinations.

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7. Distract and redirect

Another effective technique is to distract your older adult from their hallucination. Try to switch their focus to an activity they enjoy.

You could ask them to help you with a chore that makes them feel successful, look at favorite family photos, sing their favorite song, do a fun puzzle, eat a tasty snack, or take a pleasant stroll to look at the view – even an indoor stroll would work.

Another way to distract is to direct their attention to you instead of the hallucination. If they're hearing voices, try chatting with them. Hearing those voices is harder if you're now conversing with them.

Or if they're seeing someone or something, get to eye level and try to make eye contact. If they're occupied with looking at you, it could make the hallucination less intense or even fade away.

8. Get support to help you cope

Caring for someone with dementia hallucinations is stressful. So, it can be a big help to know that you're not alone in dealing with issues like this. That's why caregiver support groups are highly recommended.

Sharing your experience and getting advice and tips from others can make life easier.

9. Talk with the doctor to find out if there are medical causes

You may want to speak with your older adult's doctor to find out if there could be a medical reason behind their hallucination. This wouldn't change your response, but it may help you find ways to reduce or eliminate the behavior.

For example, some medical issues that can cause hallucinations include dehydration, urinary tract infections, kidney or bladder infections, head injuries from a fall, or pain.

Or if your older adult recently started a new medication, it could be a negative side effect of the drug or an interaction with another medication. Immediately report any changes in their behavior to the doctor.

If you're an adult experiencing hearing or vision problems, that could easily explain why you are seeing or hearing things that aren't there.

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10. Contact the doctor immediately if their safety or yours is at risk

If your older adult is severely distressed by hallucinations or if hallucinations cause them to hurt themselves or others, contact their doctor immediately to get help.

For example, they may be hitting out to defend themselves against a perceived attacker, running away from something that scares them, or avoiding something else dangerous.

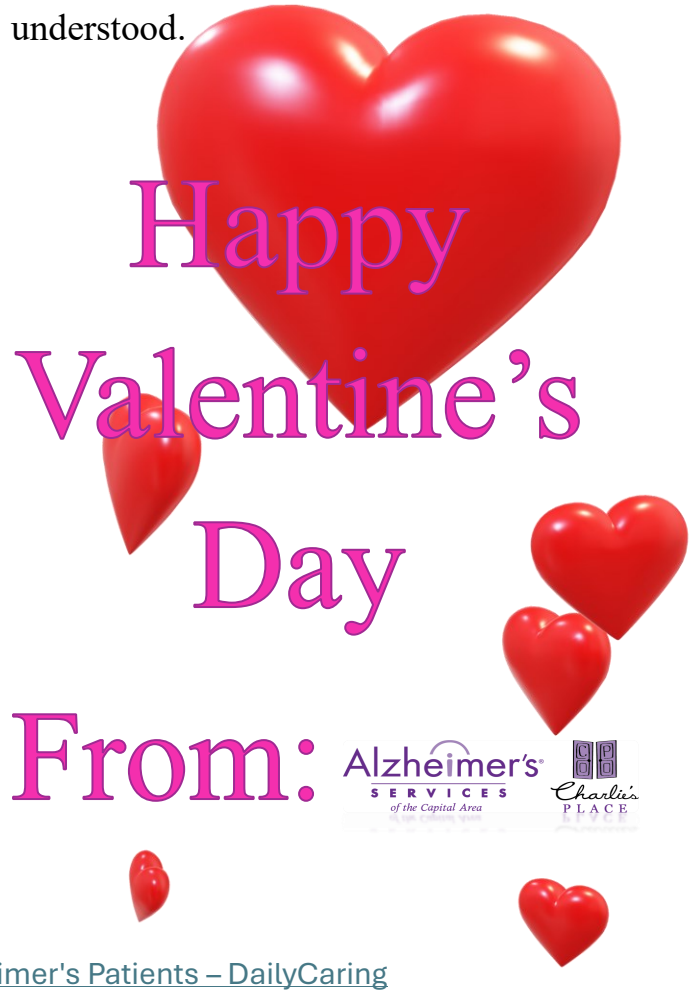
These types of actions can easily lead to injury to them and you. When you speak with their doctor, describe the symptoms, how often they happen, and if they've changed in intensity or frequency over time.

It helps if you've kept a log or notes that could help the doctor get a clearer picture of what's happening. If non-drug approaches aren't working and there isn't a medical condition that's causing hallucinations, careful use of behavioral medication could improve the quality of life by reducing the intensity and frequency of hallucinations.

Conclusion:

Navigating dementia hallucinations requires immense patience, empathy, and a shift in perspective. Remember, the goal is not to correct their reality, but to join them with compassion and seek the comfort behind the fear.

By responding with reassurance, simplifying their environment, and working closely with their doctor, you can transform moments of distress into opportunities for connection and peace. You are not just managing symptoms, you are honoring your loved one's experience and providing the profound gift of feeling safe and understood.



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February Support Group Meetings

In-Person Meeting

2.6.26 Denham Springs 12pm

2.12.26 Greenwell Springs 11am

2.9.26 First Baptist, Zachary 12pm

2.9.26 Gonzales 1:30 pm

2.16.26 Parkview Baptist 1pm

2.16.26 New Roads 4pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting

2.4.26 Alzheimer's Services 10 AM

2.13.26 In the Beginning 2:30 PM

2.17.26 7 PM

Facilitator:

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https://www.newsbreak.com/brproud-1590545/4015842463333-new-alzheimer-s-support-center-charlie-s-place-to-open-in-baker
Tips for People with Dementia
101 Brain Teasers for Adults (With Answers) - Parade
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Brainteaser

VALENTINE'S DAY WORD SEARCH

♥	Y	C	U	P	I	D	O	U	M
I	G	H	F	I	H	H	T	F	A
L	L	O	L	N	E	I	N	L	L
O	V	C	O	K	A	E	C	O	W
I	C	O	W	T	R	H	A	V	A
V	A	L	E	N	T	I	N	E	P
I	R	A	R	E	D	N	D	C	U
S	D	T	S	H	I	O	Y	N	♥
S	W	E	E	T	H	E	A	R	T

CUPID
FLOWERS
CARD
CANDY

VALENTINE
SWEETHEART
CHOCOLATE
♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

RED
PINK
HEART
LOVE

USE THE REST OF THE LETTERS IN THE ORDER THEY APPEAR TO FIND THE ANSWER:

WHY IS IT BAD TO BE A NEARSIGHTED PORCUPINE ON VALENTINE'S DAY?

♥ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

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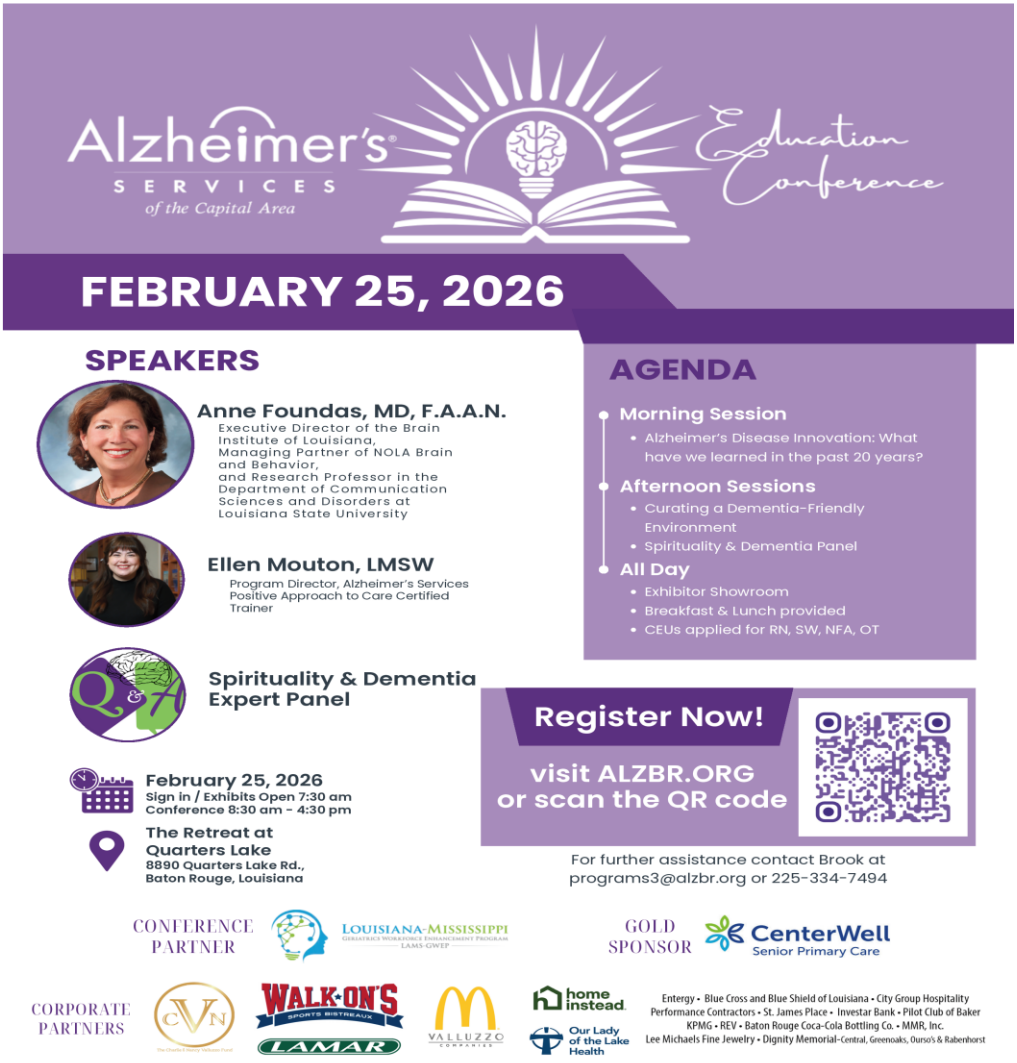
Resource of the month

Education Conference 2026



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