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# Some Challenging Situations and Strategies

| | Challenge | Strategies |
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| 1. | **Reluctance**<br>Person is reluctant to engage in conversation | ▪ Acknowledge reluctance: *"It can be hard to talk to someone else about private things"*<br>▪ Provide moment of 'golden silence'<br>▪ Gently invite questions/comments: *"I wonder if you might have some comments or questions about what's happening for you?"* |
| 2. | **Denial**<br>may be psychological and/or physiological (due to loss of capacity for insight)<br>*"A degree of denial is essential. Like somebody drinking hot coffee, we sip the truth of our condition carefully and gently".*<br>[From: Anthony, J.W. "Ideas about Alzheimer's". In Perspectives: A Newsletter for Individuals Diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease, Volume 3, Number 4, May-July, 1998, pgs 2 & 3] | ▪ Remind myself that denial can be a part of the journey – a stage of the change process<br>▪ Remind myself that it is not my job to confront denial<br>▪ Remind myself that it is my job "to be patient & "meet the person where he/she is at"<br>▪ Attune & acknowledge: "*it's really hard to wrap your head around the idea that someday placement might be necessary*"<br>▪ Provide accurate information, gently, as requested |
| 3. | **Anger** | ▪ Seek safety if necessary<br>▪ Moderate my own reactivity so as to choose to respond to the anger in a non-judgmental manner<br>▪ Remind myself that anger can be part of the journey<br>▪ Acknowledge anger |

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| **4.** | **"Resistance"** | ▪ May be signaling unwelcome advice has been offered<br>▪ Be mindful of possible coded messages:<br>  ▪ *I'm afraid; I need to go at my own pace*<br>  ▪ *I'm afraid of the unknown*<br>  ▪ *I'm afraid I can't do it*<br>  ▪ *I must feel in control* |
| **5.** | **Hearing about or experiencing conflicts** | ▪ Remind myself that conflict is an opportunity; that conflict can be part of the journey<br>▪ Seek support |
| **6.** | **Hearing about abuse** | ▪ Name concerning behaviours: "*Those behaviours are not OK. – I'm concerned about your safety*"<br>▪ Follow protocol for reporting |
| **7.** | **Hearing about suicide ideation** | ▪ Acknowledge thoughts: "*You are wondering if you might be better off dead – how hard this all is for you"*<br>▪ Follow protocol for reporting |
| **8.** | **Person wanting more than we can provide** | ▪ Apply clear, consistent boundaries, especially when "tested"<br>▪ Saying 'no' (without sounding rude?) |

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| **9.** | **Person wants 'a gripe session'** | ▪ Actively listen for & reflect feelings (anger, sadness, fear, unhappiness)<br>▪ Acknowledge unhappiness & longing for situation to be different<br>▪ Remind myself that it is my job "to be patient & "meet the person where he/she is at"<br>▪ Remind myself that a person's motivation to make change can come from hearing own voice say: "*this isn't working for me*"<br>▪ Gently encourage some small steps because being unhappy isn't enough, one must take some action to get what one wants: "*I wonder what possibilities might there be for you to do one small thing differently*?" |
| **10.** | **Person expresses guilt** | ▪ Acknowledge guilt = common experience of the dementia journey<br>▪ Consider exploring "irrational shoulds": "*I wonder what the voice in your head says to you about you in your caregiving role":*<br>▪ *"I should be the epitome of generosity & unselfishness – I should always put others first"*<br>▪ *"I should be the perfect ____"*<br>▪ *"I should be able to endure any hardship"*<br>▪ *"I should be completely competent"*<br>▪ Consider gently asking: "*I wonder if that 'should' is serving you well now*?" *What could you say to yourself that might serve you better?* |
| **11.** | **Handling a grouping of family members** | ▪ Remind yourself that family dynamics will played out in the session & "stay off their dance floor"<br>▪ Acknowledge challenges of getting everyone on to the same page and/or reaching a consensus |