

Set Yourself Up for Success During Difficult Times

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Life can be downright difficult at times. How are we supposed to get through the tough times, especially when changes to routines are out of our control? It can be a monumental undertaking. The simplest change in routine can be very unsettling for our loved ones. *Set yourself and your family up for success with behavior reduction principles.*

Your Daily Activity—Focus on YOU first!



- Develop a schedule for the following day the night before.



- Awaken early and have time for yourself.



- Write a list of three positive affirmations to set the tone for your day. Examples, “I live with courage and grace.” “I am patient and loving.” “I can have fun today.” *Notice your thoughts.* If you allow negative thoughts to run rampant first thing in the morning your loved one may pick up on your stress. Use your positive affirmations to help you change your mindset.



- Use mindfulness exercises to start and end your day. Reference article: 71 Mindfulness Exercises: <https://www.developgoodhabits.com/mindfulness-exercises/>

Preventive Strategies



- **REMEMBER, BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION.** What messages are you sending?



- **CHALLENGING MOMENTS DON'T SPROUT WITHOUT ROOTS;** they are almost always warning signs that let you know when someone's behavior is starting to escalate. What are they trying to communicate to you?



- **ALLOW THE PERSON** the freedom to make their own decisions as much as possible.



- **PERMIT VERBAL VENTING WHEN POSSIBLE.** Allow the person to release as much energy as possible by venting verbally. If you cannot allow this, state directives and reasonable limits during lulls in the venting process. If needed, create a safe space where they can do this. You could include a picture of this space in their schedule and explain that is where they can go (anytime) to express those feelings.



- **IGNORE CHALLENGING (AND REPETITIVE) QUESTIONS.** When they challenge your rule, redirect their attention to the issue at hand without engaging in a conversation about the question.

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- **IGNORE NONSENSE BEHAVIORS.** Behaviors that are frustrating to you but do not interfere with the ability to complete daily tasks and do not put anyone at harm might be better off ignored and redirected to something else.



- **SET AND ENFORCE REASONABLE LIMITS.** If someone becomes belligerent, defensive, or disruptive, state limits and directives calmly, clearly and concisely. When setting limits, offer the person choices and consequences. Be mindful of your tone of voice, body language and facial expressions.



- **KEEP THEM CLOSE.** Being close allows you to intervene quickly, provides the individual with needed attention and less opportunities to engage in problem behaviors.



- **CATCH THEM BEING GOOD.** Provide positive comments, facial expressions and body language often.



- **KEEP EXPECTATIONS LOW.** When routines are disrupted and our stress levels increase, our tolerance levels for non-preferred or frustrating activities can be lowered.



- **ESTABLISH NEW DAILY ROUTINES.** Using pictures or a written schedule that is clearly displayed let them know what their new schedule is. When possible allow them to help you make the schedule or change the order of activities.



- **FILL THE DAY WITH SIMILAR ACTIVITIES** that include tasks that are like the ones they are used to. For example: If they worked at a job where they greeted people, go for a walk every morning and wave and say hello to people walking by or call family and friends and say good morning every day. If they sorted clothes at Goodwill, set-up a sorting station at home and start organizing closets.



- **AVOID ASKING THEM TO COMPLETE MULTIPLE NON-PREFERRED TASKS BACK TO BACK** when possible. For example: If tooth brushing and hair brushing are non-preferred tasks do something preferred in between. Brush teeth, read a book, then brush hair.



- **TAKE BREAKS.** Take breaks for yourself when needed. Time out for a caregiver is often the best response to a challenging situation.



- **USE TELEHEALTH.** There are many psychologist, counselors and behavior analysts available via telehealth for support and ideas during this time.



- **HAVE FUN! BE SILLY!** Focus on making new memories.

Some strategies presented in this article have been adapted from <https://educate.crisisprevention.com>

www.lifetribe.us At LifeTribe, the science of Applied Behavior Analysis is our foundation. To maximize treatment outcomes, we help you easily integrate these principles into your everyday life. We are honored to work with adults with intellectual disabilities, dementia and Alzheimer's disease. We recognize that you are the expert as it pertains to your loved one and family. We are the experts in behavior change. When we come together with mutual respect, and common goals, we can accomplish anything. The link between our combined expertise and passion for success will be woven together as we collaborate on behavior plan goals, recommendations, and family coaching plans. Jennifer is available for Telehealth consulting at: <https://jennifer.dobettermovement.us/en/e/coach-mentor/1>