



## Resident to Resident Altercations

Resident to resident altercations can be a serious and difficult issue to face as a caregiver in a nursing home. Aggressive behaviors can be verbal (yelling, cursing, name calling) or physical (hitting, pushing). These events can occur without any provocation or due to misinterpretation of facts or situations. Caregivers must be able to respond appropriately when one resident begins arguing or fighting with another.

No group of people living together will get along all of the time. Even the closest families will argue or become annoyed with one another. Residents living in an Alzheimer's Care Center are confused due to the cognition loss that they are experiencing from the disease process. A roommate, for example, is a stranger in most cases that she has never met before. She is now sharing this space with someone who she is expected to trust automatically. If she is already experiencing paranoia, becoming accustomed to sharing her space may even be more of a challenge. When this is tied together with the fact that all of the residents are living with the same cognition loss and confusion about living in an unfamiliar place, the situation may be fertile for aggression.

Caregivers must approach the situation in a calm manor. Typically residents with dementia suffer from lability. They will mirror the emotions of those around them. If caregivers rush into a situation yelling, pushing, or threatening, the resident will become even more aggressive. Caregivers must try to identify the immediate cause of the agitation. *What happened right before the incident occurred? What is occurring in the environment? Is it too loud?* Caregivers should focus on feelings and not facts. Validate what the person is feeling and help put those feelings into words. *"I understand you do not want Sally in your room. Tell me about this photo of your mother. Did you help her with the garden she is standing next to in this photo?"* Once a caregiver has been able to put those feelings into words, then use redirection to help refocus the energy onto a new task.

The best way to eliminate resident to resident altercations is prevent them before they occur. Programming is the key to success with this goal. Caregivers should integrate as much of a resident's past interests into her current daily schedule. This will not only help the resident to feel as though she has a purpose, it will also prevent boredom. The need for a purpose does not diminish as a person's dementia progresses. In fact, staying focused with purpose is as important in the late stages of the disease process as in the early stage.

Caregivers need to remember the following important tips in dealing with resident to resident altercations:

- Never raise your voice to the residents fighting
- Focus on the feelings not on the facts
- Limit distractions during the incident
- Validate feelings and help put those feelings into words
- Shift focus onto another activity
- Prevent behaviors by developing a person centered daily purpose programming calendar.