

CAT Calls



CHANGING ANTIPSYCHOTIC THINKING

“Help, help, help, help, help.” The repetition of a word or question is likely a cry for comfort and security. It may soothe the person. It may also be a learned behavior, if the person gets attention only after they call out repeatedly. When care providers and elders develop a close, trusting relationship, the constant cry for attention often goes away.

Is it physical? The better you know the elder, the easier it is to identify what they need. Observe the time, day, frequency, and location. Check for hunger, thirst, pain, or the need to toilet (or know you will be there when they need to). Are you they too hot or cold? Are they afraid or worried?

How can we meet their “expressed need” for connection? Consider how loneliness, helplessness, and boredom are cited as the three plagues of the nursing home by Dr. Bill Thomas of the Eden Alternative. Help the person feel connected. Take time to interact at eye level. Hold their hand. Find activities appropriate for them to restore former social roles and battle boredom. Look for ways the person can be helpful, so they feel more connected and “at home.”

Action steps:

- Investigate carefully to find the cause of distress - emotional and physical.
- Get acquainted. Help the elder feel accepted and connected, not lost or ignored.
- Offer pleasant activity and structure to the day according to their preference.
- Share a snack to provide physical comfort as well as pleasant social contact.
- For repeated questions, post the answer for the person to read for reassurance. Offer notes, photos, or calendars as reminders.

Don't miss these training opportunities:

- Review how brain changes affect the ability to communicate and that a person is not trying to irritate care partners with their “calls.” Focus on the Module 3 Instructor Guide, pages 20-26 of *Hand in Hand: A Training Series for Nursing Homes*.
- Kathy Laenhue, M.A. offers very creative, easy to follow activity ideas to help people make connections both with others and in their own brains, at www.wisernow.com. *Getting to Know the Life Stories of Older Adults/Activities for Building Relationships*, at www.healthpropress.com, offers fun ways to learn what really matters to each elder.

For more information, contact a MO LANE Planning Committee Member:

Department of Health & Senior Services • Primaris • State LTC Ombudsman • MC5 • Missouri League for Nursing • Missouri Center for Patient Safety • QIPMO • Leading Age Missouri • Missouri Association of Nursing Home Administrators • Missouri Health Care Association • Missouri Board of Nursing Home Administrators • AMDA • National Association of Health Care Assistants • Missouri Veteran's Commission

- Missouri Pain Initiative • Heartland Kidney Network • Missouri Hospice and Palliative Care Association