

WHAT TO CHECK WHEN SOMEONE WITH DEMENTIA IS CRYING

A Simple Caregiver Checklist

When someone with dementia is crying, it may be their way of saying something doesn't feel right — even if they can't explain it.

Use this checklist to help you pause, observe, and look for possible causes.

1. Start With Comfort First

Before trying to figure it out, help them feel safe.

- ☐ Sit close and stay calm
- ☐ Speak in a soft, reassuring voice
- ☐ Hold their hand or offer gentle touch if they like it
- ☐ Say simple comforting words like:
 - “You’re safe.”
 - “I’m right here.”
 - “It’s okay.”
- ☐ Reduce noise, activity, or distractions nearby

2. Could They Need the Bathroom?

Sometimes crying is caused by discomfort or urgency.

- ☐ Do they need to urinate?
- ☐ Could they be constipated?
- ☐ Are they having diarrhea or bowel discomfort?
- ☐ Are they wet or uncomfortable in their brief/pad?

3. Could They Be Hungry or Thirsty?

Basic needs are often hard for them to explain.

- ☐ Have they eaten recently?
- ☐ Could they be thirsty?
- ☐ Would a small snack or favorite drink help?

4. Could They Be in Pain or Physically Uncomfortable?

Pain often shows up as crying, restlessness, or agitation in dementia.

- ☐ Are they grimacing, rubbing, guarding, or restless?
- ☐ Could they have arthritis pain, headache, or body aches?
- ☐ Are their clothes, shoes, or bedding uncomfortable?
- ☐ Are they too hot or too cold?

5. Could They Be Tired or Overwhelmed?

Dementia brains tire more easily.

- ☐ Have they had enough rest today?
- ☐ Has there been too much activity or stimulation?
- ☐ Is the room too loud, bright, or busy?
- ☐ Would quiet time help?

6. Could They Be Confused, Scared, or Frustrated?

Sometimes the tears are emotional, not physical.

- ☐ Do they seem confused about where they are?
 - ☐ Did something just happen that may have upset them?
- ☐ Are they frustrated because they can't explain themselves?
- ☐ Are they searching for someone or something familiar?

7. Could Something Medical Be Going On?

A sudden increase in crying can sometimes be a sign of illness.

- ☐ Are they acting differently than usual?
- ☐ Could they have an infection (such as a UTI)?
- ☐ Have there been any recent medication changes?
 - ☐ Are they showing signs of illness, fever, weakness, or not feeling well?

If crying is sudden, frequent, or unusual, consider calling the doctor.

Need more dementia caregiver help?

Free Caregiver Tools & Support

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8. What Helps Calm Them?

Sometimes comfort works better than questions.

Try checking what usually helps:

- ☐ Quiet room
- ☐ Favorite blanket
- ☐ Holding hands
- ☐ Soft music
- ☐ Family photos
- ☐ Snack or drink
- ☐ Walking
- ☐ Sitting together quietly
- ☐ Pet or stuffed animal
- ☐ Prayer or spiritual comfort

9. Look for Patterns

If this happens often, tracking can help you figure out the trigger.

- ☐ What time of day did it happen?
- ☐ What was happening right before it started?
- ☐ Were they tired, hungry, overstimulated, or uncomfortable?
- ☐ Did anything seem to help?

Gentle Reminder for Caregivers

You may not always know why they are crying.

But your calm presence, reassurance, and comfort can still make a big difference.

Sometimes they don't need answers.

Sometimes they just need you.

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Visit AlzheimersInYourHome.com for practical caregiver tools, articles, and guidance.

Need help understanding dementia behaviors?

[Explore the Understanding Dementia Course here](#)