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ADULT DAY CENTER

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## Tips for Helping You and Your Loved One Navigate Transition

While there's a lot to look forward to about our upcoming move, we also understand that relocating the Williams Adult Day Center may present some challenges, especially for people living with dementia. We hope to minimize this as much as we can for families we serve and encourage you to communicate with the Williams Adult Day Center team about your questions or needs so we can assist where possible.

Any disruption in a person living with dementia's routine can cause a physical, behavioral, and emotional reaction called Transfer Trauma (or Relocation Syndrome). Larger disruption usually leads to a higher or more intense response. It's important to remember that these responses or behaviors are methods of communication for your loved one. Behaviors you may experience or observe:

- emotional or physical outbursts or withdrawing into themselves.
- crying, breathing fast, sadness, agitation, or anger
- pacing, restlessness, wandering, or being unable to relax or rest.
- repetitive behaviors
- talking about hallucinations (usually people or animals).
- having delusions (false beliefs) – even some that are accusatory or disturbing.

If your loved one is exhibiting behaviors, listen with your heart to hear what they are communicating. Could they be scared? Frustrated? Anxious? Something else?

The Williams Adult Day Center team wants to help you understand these behaviors and provide tips to help navigate them.

### Tips that may help

#### Manage the Environment

Ensure that the home environment is safe, quiet, and comfortable. If possible, remove clutter and decrease noise (ringing phones, TV noise, loud talking/shouting, etc.). For some, lower or warm lighting can be calming. If appropriate, add calming music. Close curtains or blinds to reduce reflections.

Whispering is a very effective tactic to bring down the noise and emotional level of the whole room. Once you begin to whisper, others around you will likely do the same. This one is tough to do because it's counter intuitive. We want to match noise with noise. Try whispering to be heard instead.

**Be Enthusiastic:** If you are excited about the new center, your loved one will be too. Your loved one will mirror your smiles and excitement when you drop them off and when you pick them up. Ask them about their day using specific, short sentences that are easy to answer. Even if your loved one communicates that they had a less than great day, remain positive. Speak to a team member about any concerns you have.

**Project Confidence:** Even if you are anxious about the move, project confidence in the team and the changes. Assure your loved one that the same team members, participants and activities will be in the new center. And they may be able to make new friends too. Please let a team member know if you are anxious or have questions – let us help you through the transition as well!

**Anger:** Sometimes, your loved one is angry because they just want to be heard or taken seriously. They may relax if you listen to and understand their grievance and relay your intent to follow-up or do something to help. (Use your intuition here. If engaging with the topic they are angry about will make them more upset, use the technique for anxiety below.) *Please note: In a small percentage of people living with dementia, anger can turn physically aggressive, and you'll want to be mindful of ensuring your safety and your loved one's safety if this is the case. Keeping household items that can be harmful locked away and secure is always a good idea. Call in support or emergency personnel to de-escalate if you need to.*

**Anxiety:** This is one you want to counter and hope your loved one does what you do too. Use a quieter voice, speak slowly and confidently. You may want to be still and quiet, making sure they have less to process. If appropriate, reach out and hold their hand or give them a hug. Emphasize deep breathing to encourage them to copy you. Be mindful of your own body language and use it to project peace and safety.

**Hallucinations:** Hallucinations and delusions can be made worse with added stress. Usually, hallucinations are of either children, loved ones who have passed or even animals. They should not alarm your loved one but hearing about them may startle you. The key to managing the situation is to refrain from arguing about their presence. Your loved one believes they are very real. You can choose to engage by asking questions about what the person is seeing, or you can choose to not engage and redirect to a different topic of interest when your loved one brings them up. Speak with the doctor if the hallucinations are frequent or troubling.

**Delusions:** Delusions can be more difficult because they are falsehoods that are believed by your loved one. Accusations are the most common delusion, but some frontal lobe dementias can have disturbing and fearful delusions. If your loved one is having delusions, especially ones that are frightening, assure them they are safe and report this to their doctor. Please speak with a team member to access supportive resources for you.

## **Evidence Based Practices to reduce stress**

During this time of adjustment, it is essential to manage stress. You can use the following techniques alone to manage your own stress, or with your loved one to help them manage their stress too.

- **Grounding:** Take a few minutes each day to reset and recharge. Sit in the sunshine for just fifteen minutes each day. Take your shoes off and feel the grass underneath your feet. Focus on how it tickles and that the ground is solid. Absorb the natural environment around you.
- **Deep breathing:** Breathe in for a count of four, breathe out for a count of 8. Repeat three times. This is proven to increase dopamine and serotonin in the brain – those feel-good hormones. As you breathe, visualize there is a balloon in your lower abdomen that you inflate when you breathe in and deflate when you breathe out. Deep breathing daily has been shown to reduce stress and its long-term effects on the body.