

DEMENTIA & SUNDOWNING

What is Sundowning?

The term “sundowning” refers to a **state of confusion that tends to happen in the late afternoon or evening**. Sundowning can potentially occur at any time of the day. It can manifest in a variety of ways: confusion, anxiety, hallucinations, aggression, insomnia, restlessness, and/or wandering. **Sundowning is not a disease but a set of symptoms or dementia related behaviors.**

How can we help?

Once we’ve ruled out medical reasons for sundowning behaviors, there are many interventions we can try. **Treating the underlying trigger is the most important first step to resolve sundowning.**

1. Track the person’s behaviors and look for patterns
2. Make sure basic needs are met – consider hunger, thirst, hydration-nourishment, medications, tired, revved up, elimination, liking or not liking sensations, situations or settings, pain (physical, emotional or spiritual).
3. Minimize noise, distractions, and shadows.
4. Be mindful of your own, or another caregiver’s stress level.
5. Establish a daily routine.
6. Create a relaxing environment.
7. Improve nighttime sleep quality.

How can we manage symptoms?

1. Go along with their reality
2. Listen carefully to understand the emotions behind their words
3. Provide empathy, support, and comfort
4. Engage them in activities that are calming for them.
5. Create a pre-bedtime wind down routine
6. Consider medication

Neutral, supportive, responses include:

- I understand.
- That’s a lot to deal with.
- Oh, that must be hard.

