

Bathing Without a Battle: Personal Care of Individuals with Dementia (2002)

Bathing Without a Battle: Personal Care of Individuals with Dementia is written for direct care workers to help them understand and reduce the distress of bathing persons with dementia. The approach presented in the book was developed by teams of healthcare providers and researchers from Oregon Health Science University (OHSU), the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), and John Umstead Hospital (JUH) in Butner, North Carolina. Because all individuals are different, the book acknowledges that the approach must be person-centered, psychosocial, and focused on problem-solving.

In order to successfully reduce the stress of bathing persons with dementia, the behavior changes associated with dementia must be understood. Dementia results in:

- Intellectual deterioration in memory, orientation, language, judgment, visuospatial skills, concentration, or ability to sequence tasks
- Difficulty carrying out personal care tasks such as bathing

A person experiencing the above symptoms often demonstrates related behavioral symptoms such as physical aggression and verbal agitation due to fear, pain, distress, inability to verbally express oneself, and efforts to protect oneself against an invasion of personal space. Often, hygiene care produces the most problematic dementia-related behaviors.

The book presents a set of general guidelines for bathing persons with dementia. Following the general guidelines, details are given to help the reader effectively follow the guidelines.

- Focus more on the person than the task – try to meet individual preferences
- Be flexible – adapt methods, the physical environment or the procedure
- Use persuasion, not coercion – help the person feel in control
- Be prepared – plan the task before approaching the person
- Stop – assess the situation when a person becomes distressed
- Ask for help – talk with others about how to meet the needs of the person

Two forms are included that are designed to help the caregiver understand behavior and help develop bathing routines tailored to meet the individual's needs: 1) the Personal Information Data Sheet helps to collect information about a person's past and current life, and 2) the Bathing Preferences and Practices Form can be used to learn about prior bathing habits. An extensive table includes a list of possible reasons why a person suffering from dementia would be averse to bathing and proposes a solution and an explanation for why the provided solution would be effective.

Other practical and important information that the book provides caregivers includes finding the best level of assistance for persons with dementia; information on pain management; approaches to skin care that help to prevent infection, irritation or allergic reaction; transfer techniques; equipment and supplies; and the physical environment of the bathing room.

In addition to practical concerns for the resident, the organizational values of the caregiving facility need to include:

- a team approach to caregiving
- continuity in bathing care
- commitment to individualized bathing care
- creating a supportive learning environment for staff

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