



Defining Reality

The mafia moved in next door!

At times, it can seem like a person with dementia lives in a different reality. The person believes something that is simply not true. This is commonly known as a “delusion.” It can be difficult to know how to handle situations where his/her reality doesn’t match with our own. Even though it is not real to you, always remember it is real to your person. Your response has everything to do with the success of the interaction.

Avoid:

- Correcting
- Presenting “other” evidence
- Dismissing or minimizing their concerns
- Orienting him/her to your reality

Instead:

- Let sleeping dogs lie: Is it really a problem that she believes the sky is green? Probably not, try to let it go.
- Find the 'trigger.' Slips from reality often have a cause. Discover what the root is and try to avoid it in the future. Common causes are TV, change in routine or environment, misperceiving the environment or family photographs.
- Work within the person's reality:
 - If it is not upsetting, go along with it. Try to find a way to make both realities work together. For example, if your person believes that a large group of people are coming for dinner, use it as the reason to shower, do housework, prepare the meal, etc.
 - If it is upsetting, go along with it & fix it. Agree with your person's reality, acknowledge their emotion and assure them you will take care of it. For example if your person believes someone broke into their home. "I would be frightened too! Don't worry, you are safe now. I have checked to make sure windows and doors are locked." Or, tell the offender to "Get out and never come back!" or, "The police just called and they have apprehended the suspects!"

If these strategies are not effective, or delusions become overwhelming for your person or you, speak with your medical provider as medication may be needed.