



# Behaviour After Stroke

**After a stroke, people may experience changes in behaviour that can be the result of damage to the brain.** Some changes may include quick shifts in emotions, anger and aggression, lack of interest/energy and actions that are out of character for the person. The impact of stroke on behaviour depends on where the stroke was in the brain, how long ago it happened, how severe the stroke was and how they behaved before the stroke. How the person is adapting to the effects of the stroke can affect behaviour as well.

## What you should know

- ✓ All behavior has meaning. There are many things that can trigger behavioural changes. Common triggers include pain, loneliness, boredom and lack of independence with activities such as toileting or dressing
- ✓ Behaviour changes are not attention seeking, but are most likely due to the stroke and may be the person's way of expressing their needs
- ✓ Some behaviour changes can be related to frustration as a result of difficulty communicating
- ✓ Changes may not be consistent. There may be good days, bad days and variations throughout the day
- ✓ Stroke can have an impact on personality which can be hard on the person with stroke, their loved ones or other caregivers
- ✓ Some people may have less control over their emotions and/or get upset over things that would not usually bother them
- ✓ Laughing or crying at inappropriate times can occur; this is referred to as emotional lability
- ✓ Behaviour changes can impact a person's quality of life and can lead to negative outcomes such as social isolation and depression

## Smart Tips - Always follow the care plan!

### Recognize



- Identify what triggers responsive behaviours and share information with the team
- Be aware when someone is starting to feel anxious or frustrated and consider how you might respond (e.g. removing the person from a loud environment)

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### Encourage & Support



- Look for ways to promote independence
- Offer to take a break to reduce frustration and try again later
- Explain what you are planning to do and involve the person in their care
- Identify coping strategies to support a person to manage their emotions
- Encourage involvement in meaningful activities

### Strategies



- Get to know the person and find out what they enjoy
- Speak in a quiet, calm manner and be patient
- Inform the person when their behaviour is inappropriate and reinforce positive behaviour
- Keep a consistent routine and respect preferences when possible
- Reassure the family and the person with stroke that loss of emotional control is common after stroke
- Use a problem solving approach to care
- Share known triggers as well as any effective coping strategies with the team

## Seek extra support

- ✓ Knowing what the person enjoys can help with providing care. Family can help you learn more about the person you are caring for. Share this information with the team
- ✓ Recreation Therapists are experts in supporting persons with stroke to engage in meaningful activities. It may be helpful to involve them in the persons care
- ✓ If you are struggling with behaviour challenges, connect with the team about accessing supports in your area