

10. Get help. Find someone who can be with the person so you can get an hour or two of breathing room. If there is a particular time of the day when the shadowing is worse, get help for that time. Maybe a friend or neighbor can take the person for a walk or provide company in the house. Maybe another family member can be on a video call and sing songs together or talk so that you have a few minutes to shower, stretch, or get something done.

When you feel strained, remember that Care2Caregivers is there for you!



WE CARE

We hope these tips help you deal with shadowing behaviors. For further support on these and other issues related to caregiving, please call the Care2Caregivers helpline. Our dedicated, understanding professional staff members, who have also been family caregivers, are here to listen and guide you.



WHEN YOU CARE • WE ARE THERE

For more information:

Comprehensive Services on Aging (COPSA) has been providing compassionate and sensitive mental health care to older adults since 1975. A team of Geriatric Psychiatrists, Social Workers and Case Managers are available to assist families with diagnosis and treatment. COPSA also provides training for professionals, family caregivers and the community on issues related to aging, memory and mental health.

Care2Caregivers provides resources, referrals, information and supportive counseling to anyone caring for someone with memory loss. Call for help.

HELPLINE: 800.424.2494
www.Care2Caregivers.com

RUTGERS HEALTH

University Behavioral Health Care
COPSA Institute for Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders


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SHADOWING

"No matter where I go,
he's right behind me."



Someone with memory loss may behave strangely at times.

Some things they do can be annoying, such as when the person stays close enough to be the caregiver's shadow! As one caregiver described it, "No matter where I go, he's right behind me. I want to run away, but he'll still be there."

Why does someone shadow?

While it can be impossible to know the exact reason someone does this, it's helpful to consider possible reasons. For example, as things are changing in a person's brain, he knows he should be doing something and can't figure out what to do. He looks to someone else to give him direction. Another person may feel anxious and confused and feel panicked when alone—even when her daughter explained a minute before, "I'm just going downstairs to put the laundry in the washing machine." In both examples, the person's **emotions seem too much for the situation**, but it's important to recognize how frightened they feel and to remember that they are unable to reassure themselves or make sense of the situation.

What can I do about someone shadowing me?

- 1. Analyze the situation.** Is there a particular time of the day when it is worse? Are some days better than others? Pay attention to what happens before the shadowing starts, which may provide a clue to how to address it.
- 2. Be systematic.** Try one thing and see if it works to decrease the shadowing or the distress when you leave the room. If it works once, try it again. If it doesn't work, try something new, but also try it again at a different time.
- 3. Plan ahead.** If you can predict when the shadowing or panic will occur, create a plan to offer more structure, engagement, and reassurance at that time. Provide activities that are distracting and engaging so you can get a few minutes alone. Choose activities that are appealing, remembering that one person may be able to focus on folding towels, while another may be entertained by a wind-up toy puppy, a football game on TV, coloring, or looking at a photo album.
- 4. Stay together, but apart.** If you have a task to do that keeps you in one place, such as preparing a meal or paying the bills, find a way to keep the person near you, but not right on top of you. Try having the person do a similar or related activity.

5. Build movement into the day.

Is the person getting enough stimulation, including motor activity? Walking, dancing, or other exercise may decrease the shadowing because the person will be tired.

6. Offer reassurance. Not being able to figure things out can make a person fearful and look to you for reassurance. Find reassuring statements and say them over and over. Try phrases like, "You are safe" or "I am with you" or "I love you and I'm glad you're here."

7. Try to feel some compassion.

Remember, shadowing is a symptom of the illness. The person can't remember how to reassure themselves anymore and looks to you for this security.

8. Acknowledge how this situation makes you feel. Forgive yourself for feeling irritated and overwhelmed—anyone would in this situation. You are carrying a heavy burden and will certainly feel tired and unhappy. Remind yourself that these feelings are normal, not shameful.

9. Remember this is temporary. While it may be difficult now, there will likely come a day when the person is not able to follow you around or is no longer in the house with you. Try to tap into gratitude and appreciation for what you do have now. Later, you may want to trade a day of your future life for the shadowing you live with now.

(List continues on fold-in panel)

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www.COPSAInstitute.com