Alzheimer’s is a disease that can cause challenges with memory, thinking and behavior:

1 in 10 Americans 65+ has Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia.*

The number of individuals 65 and over who have or will have Alzheimer’s disease is projected to increase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5.1 Million</td>
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<tr>
<td>2050</td>
<td>13.8 Million</td>
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*According to the Alzheimer's Association 2018 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures

As of 2017, there were an estimated 50 million people with dementia worldwide. It is predicted that this number will increase to an estimated 75.6 million in 2030 and 135.5 million in 2050, according to Alzheimer’s Disease International.

The Signs

Every person with Alzheimer’s disease or another dementia is different, and the various potential symptoms are not always present in all people at the same time. Some of the common symptoms someone with Alzheimer’s disease or another dementia could exhibit include:

- Having difficulty remembering names and recent events
- Seeming disinterested or apathetic and depressed
- Having difficulty completing tasks and problem solving
- Showing poor judgment, such as forgetting to pay for an item
- Getting lost and wandering, or seeming disoriented and confused
- Withdrawing from social activities and exhibiting personality or mood changes
- Losing things and being unable to retrace steps
- Becoming frustrated or angry
- Repeating words and phrases
- Inability to follow directions or carry out tasks
- Becoming anxious or agitated, perhaps when feeling forced to make a decision
- Exhibiting sexually inappropriate behavior
- Being confused about time and place
- Having problems understanding business dealings or money transactions, or becoming confused with buying decisions
- Becoming paranoid and thinking someone is following him or her, or trying to steal
- Experiencing hallucinations and seeing people who aren’t there
- Having problems communicating
- In the later stages, having difficulty speaking and even swallowing

Please note:

Alzheimer’s disease is NOT contagious. Also, you can’t always tell an individual has Alzheimer’s disease. That person could look the same as anyone else.
What You Should Do
Individuals who have Alzheimer’s disease can have good days and bad days. They could be coherent one day and confused the next.

Be Prepared
Here are some suggestions to help alleviate difficult situations that may arise when interacting with a customer with Alzheimer’s disease:

• Remain calm
• Be patient, flexible and understanding
• Do not take things personally; the disease typically causes the symptoms
• Keep a positive attitude
• Treat the person as you would want a loved one, or yourself, to be treated -- with dignity and respect
• Avoid arguing with the person
• Avoid embarrassing the person

Interact
Following are suggestions for how to interact with a customer who is exhibiting any of the symptoms:

• Introduce yourself and greet the customer
• Politely address the customer by sir or ma’am
• Approach the customer slowly from the front
• Smile
• Speak to the person at eye level
• Speak slowly and calmly, while using short, simple words
• Use a comforting tone of voice
• Allow enough time for the individual to respond
• Avoid interrupting the customer
• Limit distractions during communication
• Increase the use of gestures and other non-verbal communication techniques
• Respect their feelings
• Ensure all immediate basic needs are met
**Tips to Help Neutralize a Situation**

Experts have developed several strategies that have proven effective for positively interacting with individuals with Alzheimer’s who are exhibiting behavioral symptoms of the disease. One technique may work better than others, so businesses are encouraged to try several. Here are some examples:

**If a customer becomes agitated or upset . . .**

- Seek to understand
  1. Try to find out what’s going on. Something in the immediate surroundings could be bothering him or her.
  2. Suggest the customer move to a different location in your business, store or restaurant. A change of scenery could be just what that person needs.

**If a customer makes an inappropriate comment or becomes loud and disruptive . . .**

- Redirect
  1. Redirecting is one way to help change the subject or mood. It can also mean encouraging the customer to literally change direction and go from one place to another.
  2. For example, you could redirect the customer by asking him or her about his favorite food or hobby. Changing the topic may also help to establish calm.

**If someone starts to argue . . .**

- Apologize
  1. Apologizing may help to take attention off the customer. This individual could calm down with the belief he or she was not at fault.
  2. For example, if the customer has become upset because that person feels their needs are not being met quickly enough, apologize and redirect the individual to another topic. This may serve to calm the customer.

  **Note:** in this scenario, “apologizing” is akin to empathizing with the customer’s feelings (versus taking responsibility for something the business didn’t do or acknowledging fault).

**If a customer is having trouble making a decision . . .**

- Give simple choices
  1. Offering simple choices may help someone with Alzheimer’s disease feel in control. If a customer is having trouble making a decision, pose a question that includes an either/or choice.
  2. For instance, if a customer is having problems deciding what to order, say: “We have two wonderful specials on the menu. Would you like the meatloaf or the baked chicken?” More complex business matters might require that you suggest the individual have an advocate, such as a family member, with them to help make any decision.

**If a customer is confused, upset or agitated, and is alone or appears lost and cannot give you the name and contact information of a family member or trusted friend . . .**

- Call 911
Resources

HelpforAlzheimersFamilies.com
A website providing free resources for Alzheimer's family caregivers and an opportunity to connect with others facing a dementia illness.

ConfidencetoCare.com
A resource for family caregivers providing Alzheimer's disease or other dementias care at home, along with a free downloadable Alzheimer’s and Other Dementias Daily Companion mobile app for iPhone and Android phones.

CaregiverStress.com®
A website for family caregivers offering a wide range of tools and topics.

USAgainstAlzheimers.org
A resource to help educate and empower public and private sectors.

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