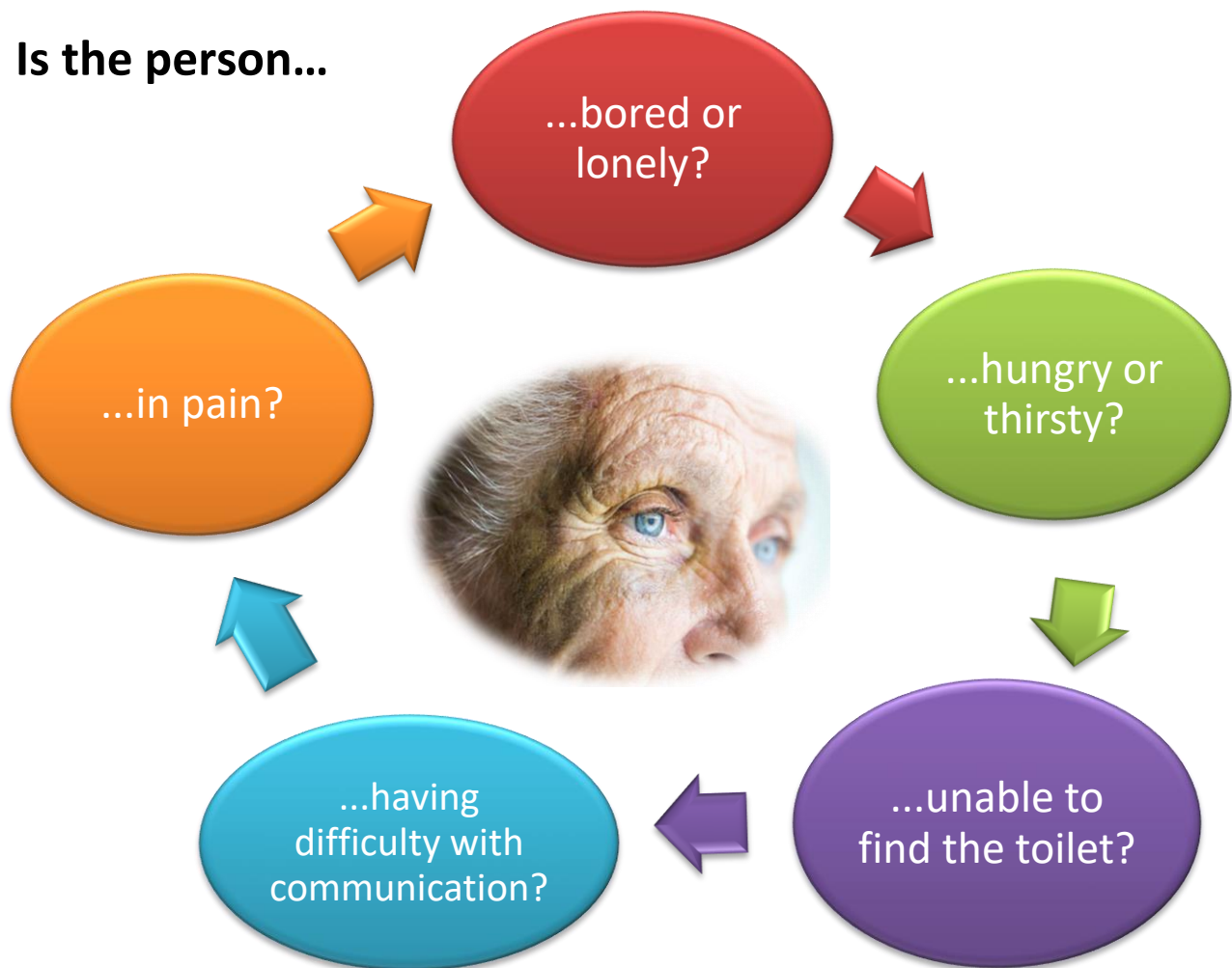


Guidance for Supporting Persons With A Cognitive Impairment Who Wander

All behaviour has meaning, including wandering
Look for and address underlying causes for the behaviour
Ask yourself, “Why is this person wandering”?

Is the person...



Guidance for Supporting Persons With A Cognitive Impairment Who Wander

- All behaviour has meaning. Protective and responsive behaviours, such as wandering, are the person's best response to their environment at any given time. Look for and address underlying causes for the behaviour.
- Persons who wander should be prioritized for behaviour support due to the attendant risk of spread, whether they are positive or share space with other people who may be positive for COVID-19.
- If possible, consider providing one-to-one support for persons who wander to ensure safety.
- Consult with your internal and external behaviour support specialist services for additional non-pharmacological and pharmacological supports, e.g. Seniors Nurse Consultants (SNCs), GEM Team, Geriatric Psychiatrists, Geriatricians.

Potential causes of wandering and suggested interventions

Ask yourself: Are they bored or lonely?

1. Discovering the person's history, previous job, prior hobbies and interests (use **"My Story"** <https://intranet.viha.ca/departments/ses/Pages/dementia-care.aspx>) can help to set their room with engaging distractions that have a personal meaning for the client such as playing music that client enjoys or playing recordings of games for a baseball fan on the iPad or tablet.
2. Many dementia-friendly activities are available online on iPads and tablets, e.g. viewing zoos, creating simple fish tanks, jigsaw puzzles, etc.
3. Engage family by setting up meeting times using virtual platforms like Skype or Zoom, so client and family can interact. This may also help families feel more engaged and decrease their anxiety.

Ask yourself: Are they hungry or thirsty?

Provide favorite snacks and drinks in the person's room. For example, offer ice cream (sugar-free options are available, if client has diabetes), sandwiches, crackers, juice. Offer drinks such as water, juice, and decaffeinated tea/coffee at regular intervals.

Ask yourself: Do they need to use the toilet?

Establish routine toileting to ensure comfort and continence. Ensure person is moving bowels regularly. Provide bowel care to promote regularity, as necessary. Ensure bathroom is clearly identified.

Ask yourself: What communication strategies should I use?

Use person's name, speak slowly, give "one word" directions, ask one question at a time and allow time for the person to answer. Use short sentences. Be aware of body language-recognize cues. Use non-verbal communication. Smile when addressing the person and approach from front at eye-level.

Ask yourself: Are they experiencing pain?

Assess and rule out pain as a cause for their need to wander. Use a validated pain assessment tool such as PAINAD @ Seniors Health intranet site under Seniors Health Resource Standard Assessment Tools. Provide appropriate pain medication regularly and assess effectiveness. In addition, consider alternatives such as positioning, heat or cold therapy or gentle massage.