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HAIR CARE IN DEMENTIA: HONORING HABITS AND SIMPLIFYING

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Hair care, which for many is a moment of relaxation, can become a source of anxiety and discomfort for people with dementia. The noise, the feeling of water, and the difficulty understanding what's happening can make the experience stressful. Keeping hair clean and tidy is important for self-esteem, but the approach must be gentle and respectful of old habits.

Before Washing Hair: Listen and Observe

The secret is to know and accommodate the person's habits.

Ask and observe: Ask how they prefer to have their hair washed. You might also notice that they preferred washing their hair separately from a bath or shower.

Past habits: If the person regularly went to the hairdresser, try arranging for a professional to visit them at home. For men, a barber can offer a service that brings back a pleasant habit from the past.

Familiar products: Using the shampoo and products they were used to can evoke positive memories thanks to the emotional memory linked to the scent.

Hairstyling: Don't forget about styling. Find out if they preferred using rollers, a brush, or if they let their hair dry naturally.

During Washing: Making the Experience Easy and Safe

Simplifying the process will reduce anxiety.

- **Minimize water:** Using a handheld shower head or a plastic pitcher is more manageable than a strong stream of water. You can use a shower visor to prevent water from getting in their eyes.
- **No-rinse products:** There are shampoos on the market that don't require water and are perfect for those who can't tolerate traditional washing.
- **Hair dryers and noise:** Many people with dementia find the noise of a hair dryer bothersome. Ask if they prefer to have their hair towel-dried. A short haircut can greatly simplify daily management.
- **Position:** If the person is more comfortable, try washing their hair with their head tilted back over the sink, like at a hair salon.
- **Respect their timing:** Proceed calmly, explaining each step. Give them time to accept and understand what's happening.

Hair care is an act of respect that goes beyond simple cleaning. By listening and adapting, you can transform a moment of potential distress into an opportunity to strengthen your bond and preserve the person's dignity.

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