



## Entering Into the Wandering World

Wandering is one of the most common behaviors exhibited by those living with Alzheimer's disease. In some, episodes it can last for a few days, while in others it can go on for months or even years. Many times wandering is brought on by a feeling of anxiety. It can also signal a change in the progression of the disease or an infection in your loved one.

It is also one of the most frustrating, scary and draining periods for the caregiver, as they feel the need to always be on high alert. However, if you can take a step back and look at the behavior of wandering as simply the disease trying to speak for your loved one, it may help you understand and provide you with the patience to enter into their wandering world.

For example every afternoon your eighty year-old Mother begins pacing and trying to leave the house. She says that she needs to meet the kids at the bus. Our normal reaction would be to explain to Mom that her kids are grown and that she doesn't need to meet the bus any more. While in some cases this may work, in others it may increase Mom's anxiety level and as result escalate her behaviors.

Instead, you could try telling her that it's not time for the bus or that the bus is running late and then redirect her with another activity. You could also bring Mom a chair so that she can sit and wait for the bus, again providing her with another activity to do while she waits. Each of these examples is a form of entering into her world as they validate her feelings and may reduce her anxiety level. By switching her focus to another activity it may divert her from her need to leave.

You could also try engaging her in a conversation about her kids and slowly navigating the conversation towards other topics. Take her for a walk to help release her anxiety, arrange for her "kids" to call and say they will be late or find an activity for her to engage in such as listening to music, sorting socks or another hobby that she finds enjoyable.

Try and find out why your loved one is wanting to go and where are they trying to get to. Use your knowledge of their personal history to understand the significance of their need to wander. Perhaps Dad wants to go back to the farm or Mom is trying to go out to her garden. Are there ways that you can help them attain this goal, without it causing them harm or you frustration?

For Dad maybe taking him for a drive out in the country or looking at pictures of the farm will suffice. Maybe Mom would like to go for a garden stroll through an area park or green house. Other ideas are to put in a secured fence around your backyard so that your loved ones can safely go outside.

You may also want to consider looking into locks or alarms for your doors and windows, so that if your loved one did ever feel the need to leave you would be made aware of their efforts. Lastly, if you are worried that your loved one may wander off when you are in public look into getting a locator device that will sound an alarm should you loved one get more than a few feet from you.

No matter what your solution, if you take the time and effort to enter your loved one's world of wandering you will have listened to them in a whole way. In addition, most likely you will have also helped them safely navigate through their wandering world.

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Azura Memory Care offers a unique model of memory care services and programs for those suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's. The company believes in the importance of transforming the culture of care through transformational programming and educational outreach. Azura Memory Care offers 13 locations in Wisconsin including Beloit, Clinton, Eau Claire, Green Bay, Janesville, Kenosha North, Kenosha South, Manitowoc, Monroe, Oshkosh, Sheboygan, Stoughton and Wausau. Visit [www.azuramemory.com](http://www.azuramemory.com) for additional information.