The 6 questions you dread

Word for word. Validate the feeling, fix it in their world, then redirect.

"I want to go home."

They want to feel safe.

SAY	"You want to be home. Tell me about your house."
SOLVE	"The roads are bad tonight. Let's stay here and go tomorrow."
REDIRECT	"While we wait, will you help me fold these towels?"

"Where's my mother?"

They need comfort.

SAY	"You're thinking about your mom. Tell me about her."
SOLVE	"She called. She's running late and said to wait here for her."
REDIRECT	"Let's have a cookie while we wait. What did she love to bake?"

"Who are you?"

They may feel confused or embarrassed.

SAY	"Hi Mom, it's Joanna, your daughter. I'm so happy to see you."
SOLVE	Never correct or quiz. Show a photo of the two of you.
REDIRECT	"Look at this one. I love your hat!"

"Take me with you."

They feel lonely and scared to be left.

SAY	"I wish I could stay longer too."
SOLVE	"I have to pick up the kids. I'll be back very soon."
REDIRECT	Hand them off to a caregiver, a meal, or their favorite show.

"Someone stole my purse."

They feel scared and out of control.

SAY	"That's so upsetting. I'd be mad too."
SOLVE	"Let's look for it together." Check drawers, pockets, under the pillow.
REDIRECT	"Found it! Let's put on some lipstick."

"I don't belong here."

They miss having a purpose.

SAY	"You've always been such a hard worker."
SOLVE	"They asked if you could help today. They really need you."
REDIRECT	Give them a job: folding napkins, sorting socks, watering a plant.

Tip: keep a backup purse with a few familiar things in it. When the real one goes missing, it can be found fast.

20 things to say that never test their memory

Skip “Remember when?” For good. Try these instead.

Compliments

Instant connection. No memory needed.

1. *“I love that color on you.”*
2. *“Your hands are so soft.”*
3. *“You have the best laugh.”*
4. *“Your hair looks so pretty today.”*
5. *“I always feel better when I’m with you.”*

Two choices

Easy to answer. No wrong answers.

1. *“Coffee or tea?”*
2. *“Should we sit by the window or go outside?”*
3. *“Do you like dogs or cats better?”*
4. *“Is this flower pink or purple?”*
5. *“Should I paint your nails red or pink?”*

I’ll go first

You be their memory. They just get to enjoy it.

1. *“I remember when you taught me to bake.”*
2. *“My favorite thing you ever made was your apple pie.”*
3. *“You always sang to us in the car.”*
4. *“I still use your trick for folding towels.”*
5. *“You were the best at holidays.”*

Right here, right now

The moment in front of you is enough.

1. *“Look at that bird out the window!”*
2. *“This song makes me want to dance.”*
3. *“Feel how soft this blanket is.”*
4. *“Smell this lotion. It’s lavender.”*
5. *“Will you help me with this?”*

When you hear “I don’t know,” switch to a two choice question. You’ll get there.

Pack your Visit Bag

Pick two or three. Bring options, not everything.

Touch

- [ ] Lavender lotion for a hand massage
- [ ] A soft blanket or stuffed animal
- [ ] Nail polish and a file
- [ ] A scarf or necklace

Sound

- [ ] A playlist of their favorite songs
- [ ] A small speaker
- [ ] A poetry or devotion book

Sight

- [ ] A photo album with you in it
- [ ] A picture book or magazine from their era
- [ ] A fresh flower

Taste

- [ ] Their favorite treat, within their diet
- [ ] Their favorite coffee or drink

Smell

- [ ] Their perfume or cologne
- [ ] Something lavender

Move

- [ ] A balloon or beach ball
- [ ] Comfy shoes for a walk

For you

- [ ] Your phone, charged, for photos
- [ ] Water and a snack for you
- [ ] The name of the caregiver on shift
- [ ] Your exit line, ready to go

Check with your person's community before you bring food or anything new.

The drive home: your reset

The visit isn't over when you walk out. This part is for you.

1. **Don't start the car yet.**
   Sit for two minutes. Breathe. You just did something hard.

2. **Name one good moment.**
   A smile. A song. A hand squeeze. Small counts.

3. **Look at the photo you took.**
   That's the one you'll want on the hard days.

4. **Call your person.**
   Someone who lets you vent without trying to fix it.

5. **Drop the guilt.**
   Leaving doesn't mean you love them less. Showing up is the love.

One good moment today: _____

One thing I'll try next time: _____

Who I'll call: _____

You do not have to figure all of this out on your own.

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