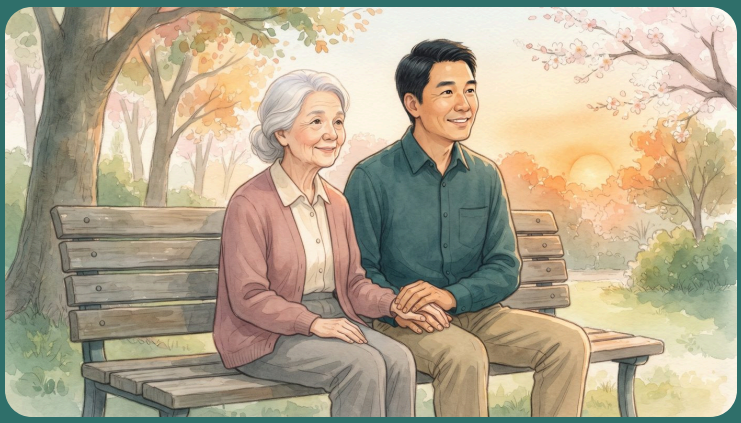
KOKUA MARKET · HOME CARE SERIES

Calm Response Cards

What to say in 30 hard moments of dementia care. Keep them on your phone, and use them when you need words fast.



寄り添う

Gentle care from Japan,
for families and care staff in America.

By Shibuya · Nurse for 30+ years · Caring for patients with dementia
Kokua Market

HOW TO USE THESE CARDS

Breathe. Feel. Respond.

In a hard moment, you don't need the perfect answer. You need a calm next step. Every card follows the same three parts.

1. **What may be behind it.** Behavior is communication. Look for the need: fear, pain, the bathroom, hunger, noise, boredom.
2. **Try saying.** Short, warm words that meet the feeling first. Use your own words, too. Your tone matters more than the script.
3. **Yorisou tip.** *Yorisou* (寄り添う) is Japanese for staying close beside someone. Move at their pace. Never force. Try again later.

Six kinds of moments

- Memory & confusion
- Daily care refusals
- Strong emotions
- Evening & night
- Out & about
- Hard conversations

These cards share gentle approaches widely used in Japan. They are not the only right way. Use what fits you, your culture, and the person you care for.

On a phone: open this PDF and tap a title in the index, or scroll. Save it to your Files or Books app so it works offline.

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30 hard moments

Memory & confusion

1. Asks the same question again and again
2. Asks for a parent or spouse who has died
3. Doesn't recognize you
4. Wants to "go home" while at home
5. Thinks they need to go to work or pick up the kids

Daily care refusals

6. Refuses a shower or bath
7. Won't change clothes
8. Refuses medicine
9. Won't eat
10. Bathroom accident or refuses help with toileting

Strong emotions

11. Accuses someone of stealing
12. Angry or shouting
13. Anxious, crying, or clinging
14. Frightened: "Someone is in the house"
15. Hits, grabs, or pushes during care

Evening & night

16. Restless in the late afternoon (sundowning)
17. Up and wandering at night
18. Sees or hears things that aren't there
19. Trying to leave the house
20. Calling out over and over

Out & about

21. Says something rude in public
22. Won't cooperate at the doctor's office
23. Insists on driving
24. Undresses or touches in a way that's not appropriate
25. A family member is hurt they weren't recognized

Hard conversations

26. Asks "What's wrong with me?"
27. Says "I want to die" or "I'm a burden"
28. Wants their money, wallet, or checkbook
29. "Why am I here?" after moving to a care home
30. Near the end of life: what to say

MEMORY & CONFUSION

01

Asks the same question again and again

WHAT MAY BE BEHIND IT

Worry. They can't hold the answer, but they can feel the uncertainty. The question is often a way of asking "Am I safe?"

TRY SAYING

"We're going to see Dr. Lee at 2. I'll be with you the whole time."

"You're wondering what's next. Let's look at the board together."

"Good question. Let me write it down so you can keep it."

AVOID

"I just told you!" or "Don't you remember?"

YORISOU TIP

Answer the feeling, then the fact. A written note or whiteboard can answer the question for you, again and again, without anyone getting tired.

Refuses a shower or bath

WHAT MAY BE BEHIND IT

Fear of falling, feeling cold, embarrassment, or not understanding what's happening. Water can feel frightening.

TRY SAYING

"Let's get warm and fresh before your visitor comes."

"Would you like the blue towel or the white one?"

"I'll keep you covered. You're in charge."

AVOID

"You smell. You have to shower now."

YORISOU TIP

Never force. Warm the room, cover with a towel, wash one part at a time. Try again in 20 minutes, or let someone else try. A gentle wash in between is fine.

Angry or shouting

WHAT MAY BE BEHIND IT

Pain, fear, frustration, feeling rushed or bossed, too much noise, or not being understood.

TRY SAYING

"I can see you're upset. I'm listening."

"I'm sorry. That must be frustrating."

"Let's sit down here, where it's quiet."

AVOID

Arguing, raising your voice, or standing over them.

YORISOU TIP

Lower your voice, slow down, give space. Look for the cause: pain, hunger, the bathroom, noise. Calm is contagious.

END OF FREE SAMPLE

Get all 30 cards

This sample includes 3 of the 30 cards. The full set covers memory and confusion, refusals, strong emotions, evenings and nights, outings, and the hardest conversations, plus a page to write your own card.

Calm Response Cards · PDF for phone · 42 pages

$9.99

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