

ROBBY'S STORY

FACILITATOR GUIDE



Understanding aggression & agitation with the ABC approach

RUNNING THIS SESSION

i Key information

This session uses four short videos and two group activities to help health and care staff to:

- understand a person's agitated or aggressive behaviour in the context of dementia
- explore the behaviour and circumstances using the ABC model
- identify strategies that may reduce Robby's distress and agitation

Complete in one 20-minute session or two 10-minute sessions (completed on consecutive days):

You will need an internet-connected computer with a screen viewable by all in the group (e.g. projector for a larger group); pens and paper for participant use and optional whiteboard or butcher's paper.

Introduction

i Introduce the session and explain what will be covered.

In this session we will use the ABC model to help us understand what is happening for a person living with dementia who becomes agitated or aggressive. We will then identify strategies that aim to prevent a person from becoming distressed, agitated and aggressive.

There are four short videos and two group activities for us to work through together.

Video 1: Robby's morning

Let's watch the first video and meet Robby who lives with dementia and lives in aged care. In this video we'll see Robby getting increasingly agitated with her carers as they take her for her shower. As you watch, listen carefully to what is said.

i Play **Video 1** (1 min) and then do the brief reflection.


Reflection before we go on to the next video, think briefly about some of the things that stood out for you about what happened in *Robby's morning*?

Video 2: Using ABC model to understand changed behaviour

In this next video we'll learn a little about the ABC approach, which will help us to unpack and understand what happened in the first video.

 Play **Video 2** (1 ½ mins)


Activity 1 Applying the ABC model

 As a group use the ABC model to breakdown what happened in the scenario about Robby by exploring the Antecedents, Behaviour, and Consequences. Work through the questions below (as one group or divide into smaller groups). Refer to prompts if needed and ensure expected answers are considered.

Now that we've heard a little about the ABC, we are going to work together to apply it to what we saw in the video of *Robby's morning*.

A – what are the Antecedents?

Identify what happened in the video **before** Robby became upset and started lashing out. What were the **circumstances** and **possible triggers**?


 Refer to guiding prompts and expected answers if needed.

Guiding prompts

- What happened directly before?
- What were the staff doing and saying?
- What was Robby doing?
- Was something else going on for Robby?

Expected answers

- The staff didn't explain clearly what they wanted to do/ or were doing.
- The staff continued their conversation with each other
- Staff didn't engage with Robby/ ensure she could hear/ ask if it was okay if she has her shower now /ask her what she wanted to wear.
- Robby was enjoying watching the TV when she was approached to shower.
- Mardi called her Roberta – even though she is known as Robby.
- Robby groaned and grimaced when she was helped from her chair to the bathroom
- Staff left her vulnerable and possibly cold in the bathroom, without explaining what was happening.
- Robby became more confused when suddenly left alone in the shower
- Robby couldn't see or hear very well in the bathroom
- Mardi came up behind Robby and grabbed her suddenly, which startled her

 Wrap up responses and highlight 1 or 2 things you want to draw attention to.

B – What was the Behaviour, exactly?

Next, let's describe Robby's behaviour in a detailed and precise way.

i Refer to guiding prompts and expected answers if needed.

Guiding prompts

- What did Robby do and say?
- How long did it last?
- How severe was it?
- Where and when did it happen?
- Who was this distressing for?
- Was anyone at risk of harm?
- (We should also consider if this has happened before or was it out of character for Robby)

Expected answers

- Robby became very frustrated and angry
- Robby pulled herself up out of the shower chair, groaning
- Robby spoke angrily and raised her voice
- She shouted at carers to leave her alone
- She hit Mardi
- She was verbally abusive to staff
- She was at risk of falling in the shower

i Wrap up responses and highlight 1 or 2 things you want to draw attention to.

C – What were the Consequences?

Now we will look at the consequences of the incident. What happened in the video, **after** Robby had shouted at staff and hit Mardi?

i Refer to guiding prompts and expected answers if needed. You might also speculate on possible consequences beyond what was seen in the video.

Discussion prompts

- What did the staff involved do and say?
- What did Robby do?
- How would the staff members be feeling?
- How did Robby seem?
- (Could any other residents have been affected?)

Answers might include

- Mardi is upset after Robby hits her and walks out of the bathroom
- Mardi says "I've had a gutful of this, I'm sick of getting hit"
- Mardi is afraid of being hit again
- Dan is initially reactive, but then speaks calmly to Robby

- Robby is still angry
- Staff get hurt and abused
- (Robby might become afraid or anxious about having a shower)
- (Staff might become anxious about working with her)
- (Her outburst might have distressed some of the other residents)
- (Robby may be labelled as difficult or aggressive by staff, other residents and their families)

NOTE: Keep in mind that a **consequence** can become an **antecedent**. For example, if staff now perceive Robby as being 'difficult to deal with' they might become anxious about working with her. They may become reluctant to interact with her and feel tense and reactive when they do. This may then have the effect of Robby becoming more anxious – an antecedent to her becoming agitated and potentially aggressive.

i Wrap up responses and highlight 1 or 2 things you want to draw attention to.

Next, you draw together what the ABC revealed about Robby and the shower incident.

What did the ABC reveal?

Now that we've unpacked the incident looking at the **antecedents**, the **behaviour** and the **consequences** let's put together what they show us and what we could put in place to avoid this behaviour from happening again.

A We identified many **antecedents** that would likely have contributed to Robby's distress and anger. The overarching antecedents that staff could change relate to:

- Communicating with Robby (eg staff need to: engage more with Robby and less with each other, gain her attention first, explain what they wanted to do, listen to her, ensure she can see and hear)
- Engaging with Robby (eg involve her in the process and decision making, ensure she can understand what is said to her, hear what she has to say)
- Understanding Robby's preferences (eg she liked watching TV at that time, prefers to be called Robby)
- Understanding Robby's needs (eg poor hearing, possibly under-treated pain)

B The key issues when we looked at the behaviour and what actually happened could also be addressed by better communication, engagement and understanding Robby's needs and preferences. Robby was:

- confused about what was happening
- possibly in pain
- left alone in the shower, half undressed

C The main consequence to work through (given what we know) would be implementing strategies to minimise ongoing anxiety especially around personal care, both for staff working with Robby and for Robby herself.

END OF PART 1 If you are splitting this module into two sessions stop here

PART 2 If you are resuming this session from the previous day (or week) you might like to replay Video 1 and Video 2, and run through the **What did the ABC reveal?** section to recap.

Video 3: Robby's Point of View

In this next video imagine if Robby could think and communicate **as she used to**, what might she say.

Let's hear from her younger self about what might have been going on for Robby.

 Play **Video 3** (1 min)

Reflection Let's take a minute to share our thoughts on *Robby's point of view*.


Briefly discuss:

- seeing the person not just the dementia or the behaviour (person-centredness)
- how we can find out the sort of information that younger Robby provided and ensure that all staff are aware of it

In reality, in our everyday work and clinical practice we don't have the benefit of going back in time to hear from an earlier version of the people we are caring for. But – we can endeavour to find out as much about the person living with dementia as possible so that we can better understand their needs and give them the best person-centred care.

Activity 2 Developing Strategies

Now, as a group let's identify some strategies that could help Robby. What could carers have done differently? Could things have been done to change the outcome?

 The group will discuss strategies that might have reduced Robby's agitation. Refer to suggested strategies if required.

Suggested strategies might include

- Understand Robby's preferences and try to accommodate them. For example, shower at night
- Engage with her
- Introduce yourself and explain what you are doing
- Make sure she can see your face when you talk to her
- Always speak calmly and slowly
- Don't touch her without warning
- If she wears hearing aids – check they are in and the battery is not flat
- If she wears glasses – check they are clean and she wears them
- Assess pain and other causes of distress (does she have a pressure area, has she had a fall, is she in urinary retention, constipated etc)
- Understand what else is going on with her life e.g. Her brother died recently
- Talk to her family? You could ask them about how she would usually respond in the past – when stressed or upset by something?

Conclusion

Video 4: A changed approach

In this final video there is a brief summing up of what we have covered today and we see a changed approach to communicating and engaging with Robby.

i Play **Video 4** (1 min) After watching the video allow the group to share any final thoughts and thank everyone for their attendance.

FOLLOW UP

i Reinforce learning in a week or two by having the same group of staff reflect on this session. For example, ask if they have made any changes in their daily practice because of what they learnt in Robby's Story. Encourage staff to share their experiences and outcomes.

References

Cohen-Mansfield J. (2000) Theoretical frameworks for Behavioural Problems in Dementia. Alzheimer's Care Quarterly, Fall

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Resource	How to access
A4 Poster of ABC model is available to be printed out and placed in prominent areas to provide a visual reminder for staff.	Downloadable PDF on Robby's Story web page
Responsive Behaviours Quick Reference Cards and Lanyard checklist cards	Available to download from DTA website https://dta.com.au/resources/responsive-behaviours-quick-reference-cards/
Responsive Behaviours app	https://dta.com.au/resources/responsive-behaviours-app/
Learn more about changed behaviours by completing a DTA online course, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding Responsive Behaviours 	Access a free course at: https://dta.com.au/online-dementia-courses/