Behavior & Emotions of Aging

Here are some of the possible behavioral changes of older adults, reasons for the behavior and possible solutions or interventions.

1. **DOES NOT WANT TO BATHE**
   - **Possible Reasons:**
     - Loss of sense of smell
     - Change in body temperature
     - Fear of falling in the shower
     - Cannot get into the tub.
     - May not care
   - **Some Solutions:**
     - Provide an occasion to clean up.
     - Install handgrips or bathtub seat.
     - Be tactful but honest about the problem and discuss it.

2. **WEARS THE SAME CLOTHES OVER AND OVER**
   - **Possible Reasons:**
     - Loss of sense of smell.
     - No new clothes that fit.
     - No occasions or need to dress differently.
     - Clothes may be comfortable or associated with eventful memories.
   - **Some Solutions:**
     - Provide occasions to wear different outfits.
     - Compliment on appearance and apparel.
     - Give new clothes as presents after asking what the person would like.
     - Show real interest in the person.

3. **KEEPS THE CURTAINS DRAWN AND THE HOUSE DARK**
   - **Possible Reasons:**
     - As vision decreases we notice fewer things.
     - The person may have light sensitivity.
     - May have a fear of “peeping toms”.
   - **Some Solutions:**
     - Suggest a visit to the eye doctor.
     - Sunglasses or a visor may help.
     - Understand the problem.

4. **CANNOT SLEEP AT NIGHT, WANDERS, KEEPS LIGHTS ON**
   - **Possible Reasons:**
     - Unable to reach deep sleep.
     - May not feel exhausted at the end of a boring day.
     - May fear falling in the dark, being alone, or dying.
   - **Some Solutions:**
     - Plan more daytime activities.
     - Place night-lights around the house.
     - Encourage the person or join them in relaxing before retiring.
     - Increase daytime walking or other exercise.

5. **TALKS ABOUT GETTING MARRIED**
   - **Possible Reasons:**
     - Loneliness.
     - Need for companionship.
     - Need for sexual activity.
   - **Some Solutions:**
     - Provide real companionship, 24 hours a day if possible, for those who want it.

6. **DRINKS CONSTANTLY OR TO EXCESS**
   - **Possible Reasons:**
     - Loneliness.
     - Grief.
     - Depressed reaction to changes
     - Unable to deal with stressful situations.
     - Alcoholism.
   - **Some Solutions:**
     - Talk honestly about concern when the person has not been drinking.
     - Suggest &/or provide social activities.
     - Listen.
     - Suggest counseling, help from Alcoholics Anonymous, and/or a minister.
     - Make a change in scenery or situation.

7. **REPEATS THE SAME STATEMENTS AND STORIES**
   - **Possible Reasons:**
     - May not hear well enough to participate in a conversation.
     - Does not remember or realize the repetition.
     - The statement or story makes a point and communicates what the person wants to say.
   - **Some Solutions:**
     - Investigate hearing loss and make special efforts to include the person in conversations.
     - Listen for the point of the story or statement.
     - May reflect anxiety, good self-esteem, or the importance of former activities.
     - Be reassuring.
     - Build self-esteem.
     - Encourage important activities in the present.
     - Be understanding.
     - Do not argue.
     - Re-direct or distract to another conversation or activity.

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