

Dolls, or what is sometimes referred to as 'child representation,' can allow persons with dementia to connect with a 'lifelike' baby doll in a way that may be beneficial for them.

A helpful, non-drug way to calm and soothe agitated seniors with Alzheimer's or dementia is to give them a soft, lifelike baby doll to cuddle.

Dolls have been used as an intervention to lessen the consequences of inappropriate behaviour or unfulfilled needs.



DOLL THERAPY

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A study focused on a single female participant with moderately advanced Alzheimer's disease showed that doll therapy promoted a decrease in worry behaviours connected to the demand for connection, as well as a significant decrease in anxiety and agitation.

Social connection and communication continued to develop significantly. The study supported doll therapy as a therapeutic intervention that might be used in the continuous care of some people with dementia to address attachment needs and minimize behaviours of concern. Despite some debate, in light of this favourable outcome, doll therapy should be explored as a therapeutic strategy to advance dementia treatment.

Bisiani L, Angus J. Doll therapy: a therapeutic means to meet past attachment needs and diminish behaviours of concern in a person living with dementia--a case study approach. *Dementia (London)*.



How to Introduce Doll Therapy

1. Don't act like the doll is a doll, refer to it as a baby and treat it like a real child.
2. Get a lifelike doll, but one that doesn't cry – that might be upsetting.
3. Don't force it, allow your senior to get to know the doll slowly.



Testimonial

"I gave my dear Mother one of the dolls from "doll therapy" just a few months before we had to put her into full time care. The doll is the love of her life. It is the only thing she feels safe and comfort from and with. It is the only thing that she is able to talk to freely and love and nurture. She believes she is the doll's grandmother and that the doll is real."

Kate (Sydney, NSW, Australia)



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