

What Is Sundowning?

Sundowning is a pattern of increased confusion, agitation, or behavioral changes that appear in the late afternoon or evening. It is not a disease, but a symptom pattern commonly seen in:

- Dementia
- Alzheimer's disease
- Lewy Body dementia
- Parkinson's disease dementia
- Some brain injuries

As daylight fades, the brain may struggle to process the shift, leading to emotional and behavioral changes.

Common Signs of Sundowning

You may notice:

- Pacing or wandering
- Increased confusion
- Irritability or anger
- Restlessness or anxiety
- Crying or calling out
- Hallucinations or fear
- Trouble following directions
- Clinging or refusing care
- Repetitive questions
- Difficulty settling for the night

These behaviors are not intentional, they are expressions of overwhelm.

D.A.P.S. Circle of Hope Foundation

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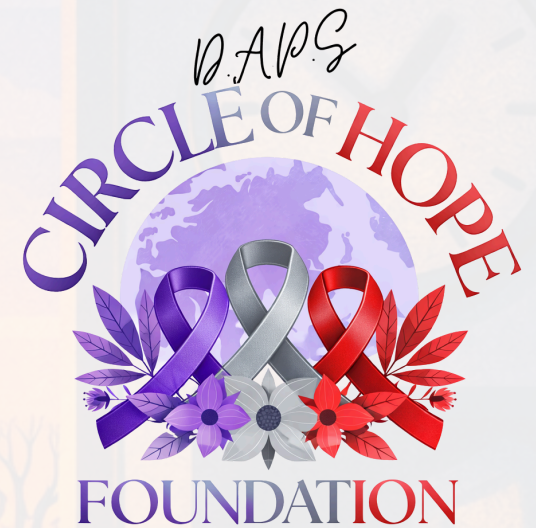
Thank you for taking time to learn about sundowning. Your compassion brings comfort, safety, and dignity to someone who needs it. Every step you take makes a difference.

For education only.

Not medical advice or diagnosis.

Information is general public knowledge.

Please consult a licensed healthcare professional for medical concerns.



SUNDOWNING (SUNDOWN SYNDROME)

A gentle guide for families and caregivers.

As the day winds down, some individuals living with dementia or Alzheimer's may experience increased confusion, restlessness, or anxiety.

This brochure helps you understand why it happens — and how to bring comfort, calm, and support.

Thank you for taking a moment to learn more. Your willingness to understand truly matters.

Why Does Sundowning Happen?

Researchers believe sundowning is linked to changes in the brain that affect:

- The internal body clock
- Sleep–wake cycles
- Sensory processing
- Emotional regulation

Common triggers include:

- Fatigue at the end of the day
- Low lighting or shadows
- Overstimulation
- Hunger or thirst
- Pain or discomfort
- Medication timing
- Hormonal changes
- Unfamiliar environments

Understanding the “why” helps families respond with compassion instead of fear.



National Respite Locator Service

What Helps at Home

Small changes can bring big comfort:

- Keep a consistent daily routine
- Reduce noise and stimulation in the evening
- Close blinds before sunset
- Use soft, warm lighting
- Offer calming activities (music, puzzles, gentle conversation)
- Provide a light snack
 - Avoid caffeine and sugar late in the day
- Reassure with a calm voice and gentle touch
- Limit daytime naps
- Encourage movement earlier in the day



Nighttime Safety Tips

- Use nightlights in hallways
- Keep pathways clear
- Remove clutter
- Secure doors and windows
- Avoid rearranging furniture
- Use motion-sensor lights if needed

How It Feels for the Person

For someone experiencing sundowning, the world may feel:

- Unfamiliar or unsafe
- Too loud or too dark
- Full of shadows that look frightening
- Confusing or overwhelming
- Emotionally unpredictable

They may not have the words to explain what they’re feeling, but they feel it deeply. Your calm presence can make all the difference.

When to Seek Additional Support

Reach out to a healthcare provider if you notice:

- Sudden changes in behavior
- Signs of pain
- Sleep disruptions
- Medication concerns
- Caregiver burnout



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