



# SAUNDERS HOUSE

MAIN LINE SENIOR CARE ALLIANCE

CELEBRATING  
150 YEARS!

A Healthy Tradition of Care and Wellness

## Tips for Dealing with Delusions and Paranoia in Memory Care

Among the most difficult challenges that at-home caregivers face are the psychological symptoms of delusions and paranoia that often appear during the middle and later stages of memory loss. To help caregivers cope, it is important for them to understand the various forms of delusional behavior and paranoia and take appropriate steps to manage them – for their own well-being as well as that of their loved ones.

Examples of delusional behavior and paranoia that people with memory loss may exhibit include:

- **Theft** – Believing someone has stolen belongings or is breaking into the house
- **Persecution and endangerment** – Believing that someone is “out to get them,” following them or poisoning their food
- **Spouse infidelity** – False certainty that their spouse is seeing another person
- **Infestation** – Believing that their body or home is infested with insects or parasites
- **Misidentification** – Believing that a familiar person has been replaced by an imposter; not recognizing themselves or objects in a mirror
- **Television** – Believing that people or events that happened on a TV program are real or happening to them
- **Abandonment** – Persistent fear that their caregiver will leave them
- **Delusions of love** – Believing that an important, famous or otherwise unreachable person is in love with them
- **“The phantom boarder”** – Believing that other people are living in the house; or that family members are speaking to someone who isn’t there

Although there is no known scientific explanation for the delusions and paranoia that occur with memory loss, memory care experts tend to believe that the person with memory loss is merely attempting to make sense of their own changed reality.

### 5 Memory Care Tips for Managing Delusional and Paranoid Behaviors

When delusional and paranoid behaviors are managed appropriately, caregivers can help their loved ones to stay calm and also make their own job less stressful. The [Alzheimer’s Association](https://www.alz.org/)<sup>®</sup> offers the following expert tips you can apply when attempting to cope with your loved one’s delusions and paranoid behavior.



# SAUNDERS HOUSE

MAIN LINE SENIOR CARE ALLIANCE

CELEBRATING  
150 YEARS!

A Healthy Tradition of Care and Wellness

1. **Don't take it personally** – Remember that your loved one's delusional or paranoid behavior is a symptom of their memory loss, not a personal attack on you. Be reassuring and let them know you care.
2. **Don't argue with them** – Let them express their thoughts and listen carefully to what is troubling them. Try your best to meet them in their reality. Then reassure them and let them know that you care.
3. **Redirect their attention** – You may be able to distract them from their paranoia by focusing on another activity or asking them to help you with a chore.
4. **Offer simple answers** – Respond to their concerns and share your thoughts, but keep your answers simple. Lengthy explanations or complicated reasons may only overwhelm them more.
5. **Keep duplicates of certain items** – If your loved one with memory loss frequently misplaces the same item and gets upset when it's lost, purchase a few duplicates of the item. For example, purchase an extra wallet if your loved one is always losing his/hers.

## Discover Our Healthy Tradition of Care and Wellness

Located adjacent to Lankenau Medical Center, Saunders House – [part of Main Line Senior Care Alliance](#) – has a celebrated tradition of providing [exceptional care and services](#) to seniors and their families. It's a tradition we're proud to continue.

Today, Saunders House offers a range of services – including [short-term rehabilitation](#), [traditional nursing care](#), [restorative care](#), [memory care](#), [respite care](#) and specialized care for individuals with visual impairments – all in a setting that is warm, welcoming and nurturing.

For more information on Saunders House, our Care Traditions Memory Care program and other professional services, please call us today at (610) 658-5100 or [contact us](#) online.

***Disclaimer:** The articles and tip sheets on this website are offered by Saunders House and Main Line Senior Care Alliance for general informational and educational purposes and do not constitute legal or medical advice. For legal or medical advice, please contact your attorney or physician.*