



Hallucination Response Cheat Sheet

A Quick Guide for Dementia Caregivers

When Hallucinations Happen

If your loved one is seeing, hearing, or sensing something that isn't physically present:

Pause.

You are not in a debate.
You are in a nervous system moment.

Your goal is not to prove reality.
Your goal is to lower fear.

STEP 1: Assess the Situation

Ask yourself quickly:

- Are they frightened?
- Are they calm or neutral?
- Is anyone in danger?
- Is the hallucination distressing or harmless?

If it is **not distressing**, you may not need to fix it.

If it is distressing, move to reassurance.

WHAT TO SAY

Use calm, steady language.

- ✓ "I don't see it, but I can tell it feels real to you."
- ✓ "That sounds unsettling."

- ✓ "You're safe. I'm right here."
- ✓ "Let's move to a brighter room."
- ✓ "I've got you."
- ✓ "We're okay."

Keep your tone low and slow.

Your calm matters more than your wording.

WHAT NOT TO SAY

Avoid:

- ✗ "That's not real."
- ✗ "You're imagining things."
- ✗ "Stop that."
- ✗ "You're being ridiculous."
- ✗ "We've talked about this already."

Logic often increases fear.

Correction often increases defensiveness

STEP 2: Adjust the Environment

Visual hallucinations often worsen with:

- Dim lighting
- Shadows
- Mirrors
- Clutter
- Patterned floors or wallpaper
- Fatigue

Try:

- ✓ Turning on a warm lamp
- ✓ Closing curtains before dusk
- ✓ Removing mirrors at night
- ✓ Simplifying visual clutter
- ✓ Offering a calm space

Sometimes the room is the trigger.

STEP 3: Redirect Gently

After reassurance, shift attention softly:

- ✓ Offer a drink
- ✓ Suggest sitting together
- ✓ Turn on familiar music
- ✓ Change rooms
- ✓ Engage hands (fold laundry, hold a blanket, pet a dog)

Don't rush it.

Let their nervous system settle first.

WHEN HALLUCINATIONS ARE NOT DISTRESSING

Sometimes people with LBD see:

- Children playing
- Animals nearby
- A quiet figure sitting

If the experience is calm and harmless:

You may choose neutral acknowledgment.

Example:

“That’s interesting.”

“Tell me about it.”

No need to escalate something that isn't frightening.

SPECIAL NOTE: Capgras & Misidentification

If they believe you are an impostor:

- ✓ Avoid arguing
- ✓ Step out briefly and re-enter
- ✓ Adjust lighting
- ✓ Change something small (jacket, glasses)
- ✓ Give space if needed

It is brain-based misidentification, not rejection.

This one is hard. Be gentle with yourself too.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

Seek medical guidance if you notice:

- Sudden increase in hallucinations
- Aggression or safety concerns
- Extreme paranoia
- Major sleep loss
- New confusion
- Signs of infection (especially UTIs)

Sudden changes often mean something medical is happening.

QUICK CALMING RESET (30-Second Plan)

1. Slow your breathing.
 2. Lower your voice.
 3. Offer reassurance.
 4. Increase light gently.
 5. Remove visual triggers.
- Repeat as needed.

A Reminder for You

Hallucinations in Lewy Body Dementia are neurological.

You are not failing because you cannot reason them away.

You are responding to a brain condition in real time.

That is complex work.

And you are doing it.

— Nora Poppins
LivingWithLewy.net