



Capgras Response Guide

When Your Loved One Believes You're an Impostor

Capgras Syndrome May Include:

- "You're not my spouse."
- "You look like her, but you're not her."
- Fear of you
- Withdrawal or avoidance
- Accusations
- Attempts to leave

This is a neurological misidentification.

It is not intentional rejection.

✓ "You're okay."

Focus on safety, not identity.

WHAT TO AVOID

- ✗ "I am your wife."
- ✗ "Look at me closely."
- ✗ "You know who I am."
- ✗ Arguing about facts
- ✗ Demanding recognition

Arguing often increases fear.

STEP 1: Check Safety First

- Is agitation escalating?
- Is there physical blocking or aggression?
- Is exit access restricted?
- Is this sudden and severe?

If safety is compromised, prioritize space and medical support.

WHAT TO SAY

Keep language brief and calm:

- ✓ "You're safe."
- ✓ "I'm here to help."
- ✓ "I won't hurt you."
- ✓ "Let's sit together."

STEP 2: Reduce Environmental Triggers

Capgras often worsens with:

- Dim lighting
- Shadows
- Mirrors
- Fatigue
- Evening hours
- Overstimulation

Try:

- ✓ Increase warm lighting
- ✓ Close curtains before dusk

- ✓ Reduce background noise
- ✓ Keep routine predictable
- ✓ Remove mirrors at night if needed

Environmental stability reduces intensity.

STEP 3: Try a Visual Reset

Sometimes small changes help reset recognition:

- Step out briefly and re-enter
- Change jacket, glasses, or hairstyle
- Approach slowly from the front
- Speak before entering the room
- Sit at eye level

Do not rush the interaction.

STEP 4: De-Escalation Plan

1. Lower your voice.
2. Slow your breathing.
3. Reduce stimulation.
4. Offer reassurance.
5. Give space if needed.

Calm repetition works better than explanation.

WHEN TO CONTACT A MEDICAL PROVIDER

- Sudden onset of Capgras
- Increasing aggression

- Severe paranoia
- Major sleep disruption
- Rapid personality change
- Signs of infection
- Recent medication changes

Sudden changes may indicate treatable causes.

Caregiver Reminder

Capgras is a disruption in facial recognition and emotional processing.

You are not being replaced.

You are responding to a neurological condition.

Protect your safety.

Protect your nervous system.

Seek support when needed.

— Nora Poppins
LivingWithLewy.net