

## You're Wanting to Know Who I Am

*What to say and do when someone doesn't recognize you*  
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*There are times when someone living with dementia doesn't know me or calls me other people and curses when I tell them I am me!!*

When someone thinks you aren't who you say you are, it can be a real b\*tch! It can feel like the person is losing you and you are losing them. However, it is also possible a couple of real brain farts might be happening – and they are farts - here and gone, but they stink!

### One Option

- You had asked them to do something or told them they couldn't do something.
- You couldn't do something shortly before the episode and they didn't like it. Therefore, a primitive part of their brain told them:

*"That is not your partner. Your partner would never treat you like that or talk to you like that, therefore, it is someone else."*

### Second Option

- They either recently woke from a sleep period or had just done something special or important.
- They just completed something hard and had not gotten their brain in gear yet
- They used up most of their brain chemistry so that they don't have the facial and voice recognition software working right then.

A possible way of dealing with it, rather than trying to get them to get that it is you, is to respond with:

- "So you think I am \_\_\_\_ (the name of the person he is misidentifying you as). I do sound or look like him, I guess..."

*Then:*

- Pause and see what they do with that info.
- If the person asks you a question, first reflect a part of the question, so it slows them down and gives you a chance to figure out what the person is wanting or upset about.
  - PLwD "You're trying to tell me you aren't Robert?"
  - You "So you're wanting to know if I'm Robert?"

Then consider something like:

- "Sounds like you would rather have Robert here than me", or "Robert? I guess I could be Robert, but I'd rather be \_\_\_\_ (give your name)."

- Possibly offer, in a humorous tone:  
*“If I’m Robert, then are you liking me better than \_\_\_\_\_ (your name)?”*
- or –
- “If I’m \_\_\_\_ (the other person’s name) are you buying lunch?”*
- Take a deep breath and work on letting go of the hurt.

It's hard to do it in the moment, but it can make a huge difference when we can find the flow of their thinking, rather than trying to stop it or immediately change it, and then guide it a bit or just go with it.