

## I'm Not Your Mother

A man with dementia is living in the home of his son and daughter-in-law. When the man's daughter comes to visit, he calls her by her mother's name. This is very distressing to the daughter. What should she do?

**Who is this person?** The gentleman appears to have at least moderate stage dementia. However, when he calls the daughter by her mother's name, the choice of names is not random. It is the name of someone who is very familiar to him. Also, if the daughter strongly resembles her mother, and if her father believes that he is younger than he actually is (see "The Backward Time Machine" section of the book), his behavior actually makes a lot of sense. Also, how good is his vision?

**Making use of abilities that remain.** He can read (see the CLUE). Also, he still can speak.

**Gather the evidence.** Does this happen for other persons that the man knows, or only with the daughter? Does this happen every time she comes over? Ask him how old he believes he is.

**Use the formula.** It is understandable that this is distressing to the daughter. Does she know why this might be happening? How does she interpret her father's behavior? Can he learn using spaced retrieval?

**Solution.** There are several things to try. One would be to have the daughter wear a name tag which has something like "Jamie" and "Your Daughter" to see what happens when he reads this. If this helps him call his daughter by her name, this might be the solution. But some family members find this approach too emotionally painful, even if the approach works. Another approach would be to see if using spaced retrieval might help him call his daughter by the correct name. It might be helpful to suggest that the daughter always wear a particular piece of clothing, like a scarf, every time she visits so that this environmental cue can help him associate the piece of clothing with his daughter's name.

**CLUE:** The man can read.