

Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD): “They’re not the same person anymore...”



Families often say things like:

“He’s become cold or rude.” “It’s like the filter is gone.” “She says things she never would have said.” “They don’t seem to care how it affects us.” “They’ve lost motivation and interest in everyone.” “They’re impulsive... inappropriate.” “They’ve changed with food and seem obsessed with sweets.”

If this sounds familiar, it’s important to know this:

In **Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD)**, the brain changes often start in the areas that control **behaviour, judgement, impulse control, emotional insight, and social awareness** — not memory first. That means the person may still speak well and “look fine”... but their ability to *self-monitor* and respond appropriately is breaking down.

So what looks like selfishness is often **loss of empathy processing**.

What looks like rudeness is often **loss of social filtering**.

What looks like laziness is often **apathy** (the brain can’t generate motivation the same way).

And sudden food cravings or sweet-fix behaviour can happen because the brain’s **reward and regulation systems** are changing.

Thinking + Filter + Brakes goes offline first

Pause → evaluate → choose → self-correct → consider consequences → stay socially appropriate

So you see:

“They say inappropriate things.” “They’ve become blunt.” “They act impulsively.”

“Their personality has changed.”

The Brain can't regulate behaviour the way it used to.

Emotional Connection + Empathy becomes disconnected

This is the part families find the most painful. In the social-emotional “felt sense” system:

In FTD, the person may still *recognise you* and still *talk normally*, but the emotional meaning doesn't land the same way.

So you see:

“They don't seem to care.” “They've become cold.” “They don't respond to my tears.”
“It's like I don't matter.”

The system isn't syncing with the situation, so connection doesn't show up in the usual way.

Drive + Reward + Safety Instinct starts running the show

When the Brain can't regulate and the Brain can't connect properly, behaviour often gets driven by the more basic systems:

So you see:

“They're obsessed with sweets.” “They pace or fixate.” “They resist change.” “They get rigid or restless.”

The Brain is trying to create stability and reward because the higher systems can't regulate properly.

And this is exactly why **Phases 5–7** of *Dementia Care & Understanding: A Family Pathway Course* matter.

Because Phases 5–7 take what you already know is happening in the brain — and teach you how to **interpret what you're seeing in day-to-day moments**, so you can respond with steadiness, protect dignity, and reduce escalation without losing yourself inside the role.