

“Making Connections & Understanding Responses”



Presented by:
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Dementia Defined

- The loss of cognitive functioning, which means the loss of the ability to think, remember, or reason as well as behavioral abilities to such an extent that it interferes with a person’s daily life and activities
- Age related memory loss causes loss of some neurons but dementia creates a more significant loss
- Memory loss is NOT the only sign of dementia. The following criteria must be met:
- Two or more core mental functions must be impaired. These functions include memory, language skills, visual perception and the ability to focus and pay attention
- The loss of brain function is severe enough that a person cannot do normal, everyday tasks

Alzheimer’s Disease/Alzheimer’s Dementia

- Alzheimer’s disease is now used ONLY in those instances that refer to the underlying disease or the entire continuum of the disease
- Alzheimer’s dementia is used to describe the dementia stage of the continuum

Communication Considerations

- Different dementias may require different communication strategies
- Communication will change as the disease progresses
- Effective communication WILL lessen negative symptoms
- Consistency in communication is very important
- Those caregiving need to have incredible flexibility on a daily basis to change communication strategies to maintain that consistency



Is this game familiar?

Communication is:

- A process by which information is exchanged between individuals
- Written, spoken or non-verbal (behavior) messages
- A sense of mutual understanding, sympathy and empathy
- How we relate to our world and others around us
- Part of care and can improve the quality of the care (conversation)
- Can require different skills with different dementias
- Open to perception and interpretation

How do we communicate?

55% = body language

38%= tone of voice

7% = words

You might be "saying" one thing but "communicating" something very different through tone of voice & body language.

1960 research by Psychologist Albert Mehrabian (UCLA, pub.1967)

What do we need to understand when interacting with someone with Alzheimer's dementia?

- Who they were/are
- Their environment
- Understand abilities to socially engage are limited (use past to engage in present)
- Their physical needs and limitations (hearing, vision, dentures, mobility)
- Their psychological needs and limitations (respect & dignity, personality, values & beliefs)
- We must adapt – prepare for misunderstanding



FEAR

Assume people with dementia are scared. They live in a world that doesn't make sense to them. They don't know whom to trust and they are looking for reassurance that they are in the right place, doing the right thing, and that someone knows how to find them. That explains a lot of the behaviors. If you think about that each time you see someone who looks like they are behaving uncharacteristically or aggressively, you'll do fine.

-Lisa Gwyther, Dementia Care Expert

Common Changes Observed with Dementia

- Repetition
- Getting upset/worried/angry (mood swings)
- Acting depressed/disinterested (social withdrawal)
- Hiding things OR believing others are hiding/stealing things
- Hallucinations/Delusions
- Wandering/Pacing
- Not concerned about appearance
- Loss of inhibitions
- Resistive
- Aggressive/Irritable

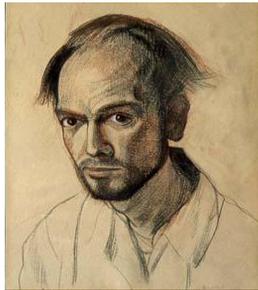
Other factors than can affect behavior

- Sad, fear, stress, confusion, anxiety
- Health related problems (illness, pain, new medications, lack of sleep, restless)
- Other physical issues (infections, constipation, vision or hearing, hunger, thirst)
- Recent changes (move, rearrange house/furniture, new caregiver)
- Too much/not enough stimulation

Who does the person with dementia see?

Self-Portrait Comparison (Wilhelm Uttermohlen)

Courtesy of Galerie Becket Odille Boicos Paris



1967



1996

Self portrait comparison



1967



1996



2000

Dementia and Communication

- Word related issues: (finding, using, inventing, organization)
- Easily losing train of thought / shorter attention span
- Reverting to a primary language
- Swearing
- "Regionalisms" (i.e. pop/soda)
- Talking less often OR talking all the time
- Relying on gestures instead of speaking
- Be patient & calm – even when you don't want to be
- Listen
- Use their preferred name
- Focus on the person and the conversation

- Give simple commands, directions one step at a time (nouns are especially helpful)
- Use the same words when repeating (don't quiz)
- Watch body language (non-verbal, gestures, eye contact, body position, emotional response)
- Speak slowly, clearly, in a lower pitch
- Avoid saying "don't"
- Use the past to engage in the present (values, interests, etc.)
- The more you know about the person the more effective you can be with basic communication throughout the disease process

A point to ponder:



"I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant."



**KEEP
CALM
&
FOLLOW
THE RULES**

“The Rules”

Rule #1: There is no right or wrong – only what works in the moment

Rule #2: Don't argue

Rule #3: You are wrong & they are right (*safety)

Rule #4: Validate their truth

Rule #5: Ask yourself, “Is it worth it?”

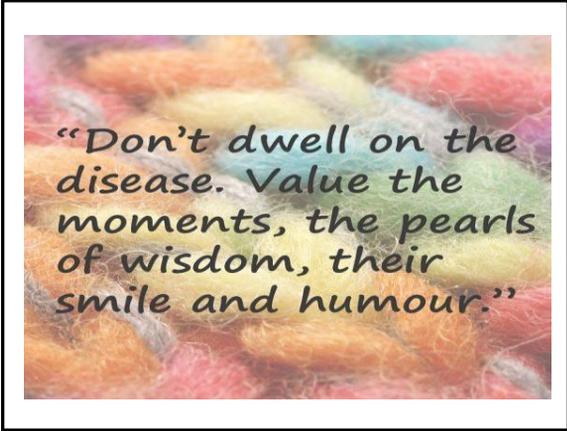
Rule #6: Observe before you act (adapt if needed) – don't be afraid to try and do things “differently”

Resources

- Alzheimer's Association, www.alz.org/mnnd
- 2018 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures
- *Associated Clinic of Psychology*, Dr. John E. Brose, Ph.D., L.P. and Catherine R. Johnson, Psy.D., L.P.
- Resources provided from: Aging Services of Minnesota, Dementia Care Certificate Program
- *Alzheimer's Basic Caregiving & Activities of Daily Living*, Kathy Laenhue
- *Dementia Beyond Drugs*, G. Allen Power, M.D.
- American Health Assistance Foundation (2000-2012)
- Mayo Clinic Guide to Alzheimer's disease (2013)

Resources

- *The Language of Emotional Intelligence*, Jeanne Segal, Ph.D.
- *The Importance of Effective Communication*, Edward G. Wertheim, Ph.D.
- *Communication– Best ways to interact with the person with dementia*, Alzheimer's Association®
- *Developing Meaningful Connections with People with Dementia*, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- *The Best Friends Approach to Alzheimer's Care*, Virginia Bell & David Troxel
- www.nia.nih.gov





Presenter Information

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A rectangular box with a black border. At the top, the text "Presenter Information" is written in a bold, blue font. Below this, there is a collage of five images: a group of zebras, a sunset over a landscape, a giraffe's head, a smiling woman wearing a hat, and a group of lions resting on the ground. To the right of the collage, the presenter's name and title are listed, followed by a line for an email address.
