Understanding the Dementia Experience

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Objectives

- Demonstrate the impact the symptoms of dementia have on a patient's abilities through a simulation of empathy and sensitivity training.
- Demonstrate techniques to communicate with individuals with dementia.
- Demonstrate responsibility in providing person-centered care to avoid stereotyping and discrimination.

WARNING:

Text at your own risk!
Impact of Symptoms

- Difficulty with
  - Visual-spatial relations
  - Reasoning and abstract thinking
  - Language and ability to communicate

- Changes in
  - Executive functioning
  - Memory
  - Concentration

Find the honey...

Which is which?

Which is the sugar?
Physical Challenges

- Visual perception difficulties
- Difficulty with sensory inputs
  - “Agnosia”
- Diminished coordination
- Limited ability to complete motor tasks
  - “Apraxia”

Solutions:

- Labeling
- Familiarity
- Simplicity
- Environmental Modification

- And.....

Follow the directions

- Stand and stretch
- Place your notes in your chair
- Walk around the perimeter of the room
- Grab a brochure
- Write your name on your notes
- Give someone your business card
- Sit down
- Shake hands with your neighbor
What did you say?

- Stand up, go to the ______ and grab your ______ so we can meet ______ and Tom.
- I ______ or our ______ at our o’clock last ______
- I ______ for four ______ at four o’clock last Friday.

Communication Challenges

- Loss of memory
  - "Amnesia"
    - Word-finding difficulty
    - Repetition
- Inability to communicate
  - "Aphasia"
    - Loss of ability to speak in clear sentences
    - Loss of ability to understand
    - Unable to use words
- Revert to native language

Solutions:

- Simple directions
- Minimize distractions
- Slow and clear voice
- Offer cues
- Use verbal AND non-verbal communication

- And...
Johnny...

- curses all the time
- slams doors for no apparent reason
- is easily agitated
- likes to be alone
- is acting out sexually
- is 13 years old
- is 72 years old with dementia

What’s going on with Johnny?

How would you feel if you were diagnosed with a type of dementia?

Common Emotions

- Loss
- Isolation/loneliness
- Sadness
- Confusion
- Worry/anxiety
- Frustration
- Fear
- Paranoia
- Anger
- Embarrassment

(Bell & Troxel, p. 12, The Best Friends Approach)
Common Emotions

Dementia is a subjective experience!

To care for a person with dementia, you must address the PERSON.

Providing Person-Centered Care

- Reframing our perceptions
  - Ability vs. Disability
  - Person vs. Patient
  - His/Her reality vs. Our reality
- Reframing our programming
  - Routine vs. Rigidity
  - Adaptability vs. Inflexibility
  - Appropriate vs. Personalized

Lumping and Labelling

- Group by profession
- Group by age (decades)

How should we design the program?
The Who, What, and Where

Intervention Assessment Factors
- Person (Who)
- Task (What)
- Environment (Where)

Care Solutions:
- Validation
- Respond to emotions
- Focus on strengths
- Know the Person better than the Disease!
- And...

PAUSE
Make sure to PAUSE when caring...
- Provide
- Assess
- Understand
- Strengthen and Support
- Empathize
Summary

- Describe the impact of symptoms in THEIR terms
- Identify ways to improve our communication with our clients/friends/members
- Implement person-centered care
  - Follow PAUSE
  - Use the care guides provided

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Thank you

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