



# Dementia Care Approaches

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## **Icebreaker Activity**

### **Dementia Care Challenge Scenario:**

**"You are a caregiver for an elderly person with dementia. They are becoming increasingly agitated and restless during the evening hours, making it challenging for them to rest or sleep. This agitation is also causing stress for you as their caregiver. What creative approaches or strategies could you use to help them relax and have a peaceful evening routine?"**



**Objectives:**  
**By the end of this lesson,**  
**participants will:**

- Understand what dementia is and its common causes.
- Gain insights into person-centered care for individuals with dementia.
- Learn about effective communication strategies for dementia care.
- Develop an awareness of behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) and strategies to manage them.
- Understand other dementia care approaches.
- Discuss the importance of caregiver self-care.

# What is Dementia? What Causes Dementia?

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# How Alzheimer's Changes the Brain?

[https://youtu.be/0GXv3mHs9AU?  
si=da2cadRsN32lp9IS](https://youtu.be/0GXv3mHs9AU?si=da2cadRsN32lp9IS)



# Person Centered Care

- Concept of person-centered care as the cornerstone of effective dementia care.
- Importance of treating individuals with dementia as unique persons with histories, preferences, and emotions.
- Examples of how person-centered care can enhance the quality of life for individuals with dementia.

# Communication Challenges

- **Language Difficulties:** As dementia advances, individuals may struggle to find the right words or may use words incorrectly. They may also have difficulty understanding spoken and written language.
- **Memory Loss:** Short-term memory loss is common in dementia, which can lead to repetitive questions or statements. Individuals may forget recent conversations, causing frustration.
- **Impaired Comprehension:** Dementia can affect the ability to comprehend complex sentences or abstract concepts. Simple, straightforward language is often easier to understand.

# More Communication Challenges

- **Difficulty Expressing Needs:** Individuals may have trouble expressing their needs, feelings, or pain, leading to frustration or behavioral changes.
- **Emotional Changes:** Dementia can cause emotional changes, making individuals more prone to mood swings, agitation, or anxiety, which can affect communication.
- **Loss of Social Inhibitions:** Some individuals may lose social inhibitions and may make inappropriate comments or gestures.
- **Sensory Impairments:** Dementia may co-occur with sensory impairments, such as hearing loss or visual impairment, further complicating communication



# How can we help?

## Communication Techniques/Strategies

- **Active Listening:** Be fully present and attentive when the individual is speaking. Show empathy and patience. Respond with nods, facial expressions, and verbal affirmations like "I understand."
- **Use Non-Verbal Cues:** Non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions, gestures, and body language, can convey emotions and intentions. Maintain eye contact and use a warm and reassuring tone.
- **Speak Clearly and Calmly:** Use simple and concise language. Speak slowly and clearly without raising your voice. Avoid using complex sentences or abstract concepts.
- **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Instead of yes/no questions, ask open-ended questions that encourage more extended responses. For example, "Tell me about your favorite childhood memories."

# More Communication Strategies

- **Offer Choices:** Give individuals choices when appropriate. For example, "Would you like to wear the blue shirt or the red shirt today?" This can provide a sense of control.
- **Use Visual Aids:** Visual cues, such as photographs, calendars, or written notes, can assist in conveying information and reminding individuals of daily routines.
- **Be Patient and Allow Time:** Individuals with dementia may need extra time to process information and respond. Avoid rushing or interrupting them.
- **Redirect Rather Than Correct:** If an individual provides incorrect information or has a false belief (a delusion), it's generally more helpful to redirect the conversation rather than correct them. Correcting may lead to frustration.

# Final Strategies for Communication (Possibly Most Important)

- **Empathize and Validate:** Acknowledge the individual's feelings and validate their emotions. For example, "I can see that you're upset. It's okay to feel that way."
- **Maintain Consistency:** Consistency in routines, caregivers, and communication approaches can provide a sense of security and predictability.
- **Adapt to Their Reality:** Be flexible and adapt to the individual's reality, even if it differs from objective reality. Your goal is to provide comfort and reduce distress.
- **Minimize Distractions:** Choose quiet and calm environments for conversations to minimize distractions and enhance focus.

# What is BPSD?

Behavioral and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD) refer to a range of non-cognitive symptoms and behaviors that can occur in individuals with dementia.

# What are some of the symptoms of BPSD?

- **Agitation:** Restlessness, pacing, and constant movement.
- **Aggression:** Verbal or physical aggression directed towards oneself, others, or objects.
- **Wandering:** Aimless or repetitive walking, sometimes leading to disorientation or safety concerns.
- **Anxiety:** Excessive worry, fear, or unease.
- **Depression:** Persistent sadness, apathy, or withdrawal from social activities.
- **Hallucinations:** False perceptions, often involving seeing, hearing, or feeling things that are not there.
- **Delusions:** False beliefs, such as paranoia or suspicions about others.
- **Repetitive Behaviors:** Repeating words, phrases, or actions over and over.
- **Sundowning:** Increased confusion, agitation, or anxiety in the late afternoon or evening.

# Potential Causes of BPSD?

- **Pain or Discomfort:** Individuals with dementia may have difficulty expressing physical discomfort, leading to frustration and agitation. Addressing pain through medication or non-pharmacological methods is essential.
- **Unmet Needs:** BPSD can result from unmet physical or emotional needs, such as hunger, thirst, loneliness, or a need for stimulation. Caregivers should ensure these needs are met promptly.
- **Communication Difficulties:** Dementia often impairs communication skills, causing frustration when individuals cannot express themselves or understand others. Effective communication strategies can reduce this frustration.
- **Environmental Factors:** Overstimulating or unfamiliar environments can trigger BPSD. Creating a calm, familiar, and safe environment is important.
- **Medication Side Effects:** Some medications used to manage dementia symptoms may contribute to BPSD. Regular medication reviews with a healthcare professional are essential.

# Strategies for Preventing or Managing BPSD?

- **Create a Structured Routine:** Establishing a predictable daily routine can provide a sense of security and reduce anxiety. Consistency in mealtimes, activities, and sleep patterns can be beneficial.
- **Identify Triggers:** Caregivers should observe and identify specific situations or factors that trigger BPSD. Common triggers include loud noises, crowded spaces, or certain activities. Once identified, efforts can be made to avoid or minimize these triggers.
- **Use Redirection Techniques:** When an individual with dementia becomes agitated or upset, redirecting their attention to a different, calming activity or topic can be effective. For example, if someone is upset about leaving the house, engage them in a conversation about a favorite hobby.
- **Non-Pharmacological Interventions:** These can include music therapy, art therapy, aromatherapy, or sensory stimulation to soothe and engage individuals with dementia.

# BPSD final thoughts:

- **Communication Strategies:** Use clear and simple language, provide visual cues, and give individuals with dementia time to respond. Avoid arguing or correcting their reality. Validate their emotions and feelings.
- **Engage in Physical Activity:** Regular physical activity can help reduce agitation and restlessness. Exercises tailored to their abilities, such as gentle stretching or short walks, can be beneficial.
- **Medication Management:** In severe cases, when non-pharmacological approaches are insufficient, healthcare professionals may consider medications to manage specific BPSD symptoms. However, this should be done cautiously and under close supervision.
- **Family and Caregiver Education:** Educate family members and caregivers about dementia and BPSD, teaching them to recognize triggers and employ appropriate interventions.



# Other Approaches to Dementia Care

- **Validation Therapy:** This approach involves empathetic listening and validation of the emotions and feelings expressed by the person with dementia. It focuses on understanding their reality and providing emotional support.
- **Reminiscence Therapy:** Reminiscence involves encouraging individuals with dementia to recall and discuss past experiences, often using photographs, music, or other triggers. This can help stimulate memory, reduce anxiety, and foster a sense of connection.
- **Montessori-Based Dementia Programming:** This approach adapts Montessori principles for use in dementia care, emphasizing meaningful activities, independence, and engagement. It involves using simple tasks and activities that match the individual's abilities.
- **Sensory Stimulation:** Sensory activities, such as aromatherapy, tactile objects, soothing music, or soft lighting, can help calm and engage individuals with dementia by appealing to their sensory perceptions.
- **Music Therapy:** Music can have a powerful impact on individuals with dementia. Music therapy involves using familiar songs or music to stimulate memory, elevate mood, and reduce agitation.
- **Art Therapy:** Creative arts, like painting, drawing, or crafts, provide a means of self-expression and engagement for individuals with dementia, even when verbal communication is limited.

# Spotlight: Montessori Approach

- Video for Montessori:

[https://youtu.be/w2HQoD36E6o?si=vkBwpW2\\_HdphomTp](https://youtu.be/w2HQoD36E6o?si=vkBwpW2_HdphomTp)





# Caregiver Self-Care

- **Respite Care:** Arrange for regular breaks or respite care to recharge. This can be done by involving other family members, friends, or hiring professional caregivers for temporary assistance.
- **Seek Support:** Join a support group for caregivers of individuals with dementia. Sharing experiences, tips, and challenges with others who understand can be incredibly beneficial.
- **Self-Education:** Learn more about dementia and its stages. Understanding the condition can help you anticipate and cope with its challenges more effectively.
- **Set Realistic Expectations:** Recognize that you can't do everything on your own. It's okay to ask for help and acknowledge your limitations.
- **Healthy Eating:** Maintain a balanced diet to ensure you have the energy and resilience to care for your loved one. Avoid excessive caffeine or junk food, as they can contribute to stress.

# More Caregiver Self Care Ideas

- **Regular Exercise:** Incorporate physical activity into your routine, even if it's just a short walk. Exercise can reduce stress and improve mood.
- **Sleep:** Ensure you get enough sleep. Sleep deprivation can negatively impact your ability to provide care and handle stress.
- **Time for Yourself:** Make time for your hobbies and interests outside of caregiving. Engaging in activities you enjoy can help relieve stress and provide a sense of normalcy.
- **Meditation and Relaxation:** Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or yoga to manage stress and promote emotional well-being.
- **Professional Counseling:** Consider seeking counseling or therapy to address the emotional toll of caregiving. A therapist can provide strategies for coping with stress, grief, and complex emotions.



# Group Discussion

# Case Study

## Case Study 1: Mrs. Johnson

Mrs. Johnson is an 80-year-old woman diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. She lives with her husband, Mr. Johnson, who is also her primary caregiver. In recent months, Mr. Johnson has noticed significant changes in his wife's behavior. Mrs. Johnson often becomes agitated and disoriented, especially during the late afternoon and evening hours. She has difficulty recognizing her husband and frequently asks about her parents, who have been deceased for many years. Mr. Johnson is becoming increasingly frustrated and stressed, and he's not sure how to best care for his wife.



# Questions to Consider:



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- What person-centered care approaches can Mr. Johnson implement to improve Mrs. Johnson's quality of life and reduce her agitation?
- How can Mr. Johnson effectively communicate with his wife when she is disoriented or asks about her deceased parents?
- What strategies can be used to address Mrs. Johnson's agitation during the late afternoon and evening hours?
- What resources and support can Mr. Johnson seek to help him cope with the challenges of caregiving?



Background: John is a 85-year-old man diagnosed with Lewy body dementia. He lives in a memory care facility, and his family visits regularly. Recently, John has been experiencing hallucinations, which are causing him considerable distress. He believes he sees animals in his room and often becomes agitated, attempting to shoo them away. The facility staff has tried various interventions, but the hallucinations persist. John's family is concerned about his well-being and are unsure how to support him best.

## Case Study 2: John





# Questions to Consider about John's Case

- How can a person-centered approach be applied in John's care to address his hallucinations and reduce distress?
- What communication strategies can the staff and family use when John is experiencing hallucinations?
- What might be some triggers or underlying causes of John's hallucinations, and how can they be identified?
- What non-pharmacological interventions and approaches can be considered to manage John's hallucinations effectively?

# Resources

[www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)

What Is Dementia? Symptoms, Types, and Diagnosis |  
National Institute on Aging

[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)

Stages & Behaviors | Alzheimer's Association

<https://youtu.be/0GXv3mHs9AU?si=da2cadRsN32lp9IS>

How Alzheimer's Changes the Brain

[https://youtu.be/w2HQoD36E6o?si=vkBwpW2\\_HdphomTp](https://youtu.be/w2HQoD36E6o?si=vkBwpW2_HdphomTp)

How the Montessori Approach Improves the Lives of People with Dementia

# Thank you for joining our ECHO today!

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