



# Understanding Cognitive Loss

Communication  
Behaviors

Meaningful Engagement



Navigation icons: back, forward, search, etc.

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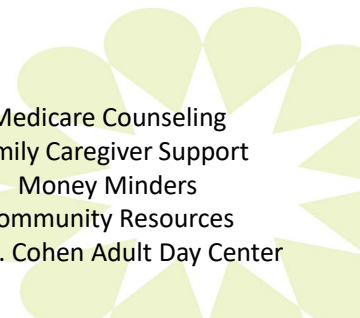
## About Southern Maine Agency on Aging

*The Southern Maine Agency on Aging is the focal point in Cumberland and York counties for resources, services and information to empower older adults, adults with disabilities, and their caregivers to live to their fullest potential.*

### Programs

Meals on Wheels  
Community Cafes  
Tai Chi  
A Matter of Balance  
Fall Prevention

Medicare Counseling  
Family Caregiver Support  
Money Minders  
Community Resources  
Sam L. Cohen Adult Day Center



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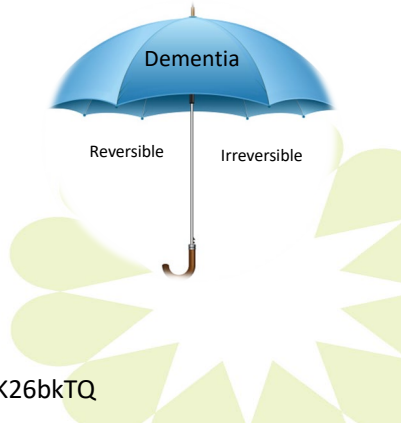
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## Basics in Cognitive Loss Recap

- Normal Aging
- Dementia/ Delirium
- Cognitive Abilities/Losses
- Behaviors
- Strategies for Care partners
- Care Partner self care



**Teepa Snow: Brain Changes Video Link:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkRvK26bkTQ>



## Class Terminology

A few terms to discuss:

*Alzheimer's Disease*

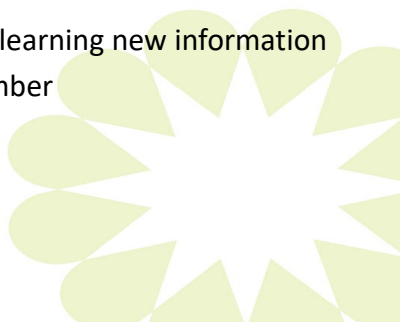
*Care Recipient*

*Life Story*

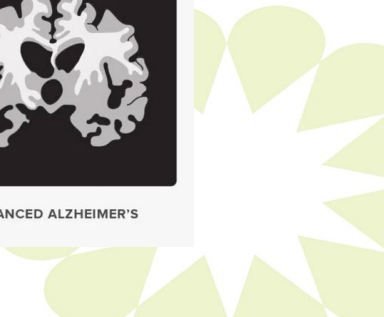
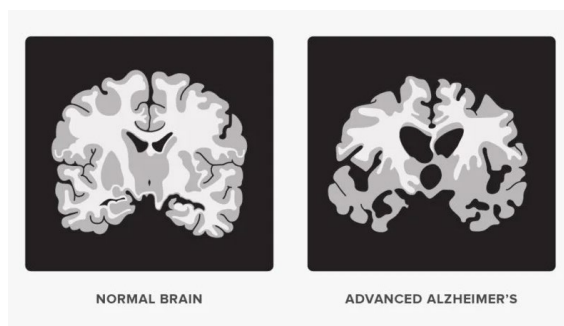


## Communication: Setting the Stage

- Memory is disrupted first, then language, reasoning and social behavior
- Difficulty forming new memories or learning new information
- Older memories are easier to remember



## Communication: Setting the Stage



## Communication

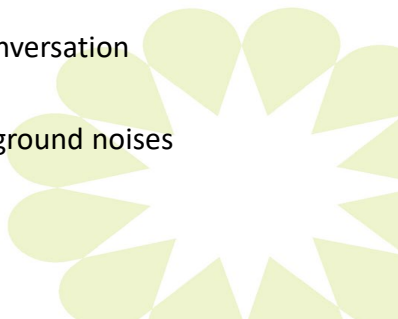
"I've learned that  
people will forget what  
you said, people will  
forget what you did, but  
people will never forget  
how you made them feel."

- Maya Angelou



## Communication and Dementia

- Word-finding trouble
- No longer understanding the meaning of words
- Loss of train of thought
- Inability to pay attention for long conversation
- May repeat themselves
- May have trouble blocking out background noises



## Communication

93% of communication is non-verbal

....and only 7% of communication is verbal



## Verbal Communication Tools

- Keep language simple and concrete
- Do not ask too many questions
- Break down activities into steps
- Do not explain too much
- Do not argue, confront, or correct
- Be direct and specific



## Non-Verbal Communication Tools

- Eye contact
- Pointing/Gestures
- Physical demonstration or touch
- Mirroring
- Hand over Hand
- Good timing
- Pay attention to body language



## Communication and the Environment

How can we alter the environment to  
better support our care recipient?

- Lighting
- Noise
- Environmental cues

Use a person's life story





## Uncovering Behaviors & Feelings

- Why do behavioral changes happen?
- Behaviors other than memory loss and confusion are common
- Behaviors are a form of communication
- Thorough medical checkups are essential

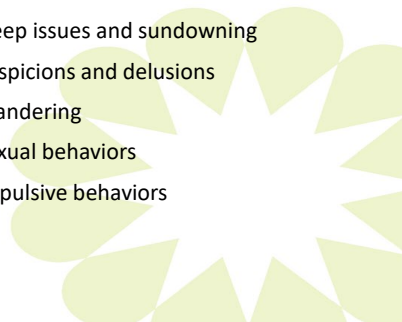


## Challenging Behaviors

- Are you and your care recipient safe?
- Some behaviors you may see:
  - Aggression and anger
  - Anxiety and agitation
  - Depression
  - Hallucinations
  - Repetition
  - Sleep issues and sundowning
  - Suspicions and delusions
  - Wandering
  - Sexual behaviors
  - Impulsive behaviors

**Teepa Snow: Challenging Behavior Video Link:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpXeefZ2jAM>





## Aggression and Anger

### Causes

- Physical
- Communication
- Environment

### Response

- Respond calmly and do not argue
- Redirect and rechannel
- Investigate for cause



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## Anxiety and Agitation

### Causes

- Physical
- Communication
- Environment

### Response

- Respond calmly and do not argue
- Redirect and rechannel
- Provide opportunity for input
- Investigate for cause



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## Depression

### Signs

- Loss of interest in activities and hobbies
- Social withdrawal
- Apathy

### Treatment

- Combination of medication along with non-medicinal approaches
- Non-Medicinal-
  - Support Groups/ Counseling
  - Activities the person enjoys



## Hallucinations

### Causes

- Schizophrenia
- Eyesight/Hearing problems
- Medications
- Infection

### Response

- Comfort and reassurance
- Alter environment



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## Sundowning

### Factors to consider

- New environment
- Mixed up “internal body clock”
- Overstimulating day

### Tips

- Create a routine
- Make note of sundowning triggers



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## Repetition; Suspensions and Delusions

### Response for Repetition

- Focus on emotion behind the repetition
- Always provide an answer to a repeating question
- Rechannel- can you turn a repeating behavior into an activity
- Visual tools may be helpful

### Response for Suspensions and Delusions

- Do not argue
- Redirect
- Replace items



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## Wandering

### Reduce the Risk

- Involve person in daily activities and meaningful engagement
- Make sure basic needs are met

### Environmental Changes

- Camouflage doors or door knobs
- Place warning bells above doors

### Plan Ahead

- Alzheimer's Association Wandering Support  
<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/safety/medicalert-with-24-7-wandering-supportorg>
- A Place for Mom: GPS Trackers for Seniors With Dementia: Helpful Bracelets, Watches, and Other Devices  
<https://www.aplaceformom.com/caregiver-resources/articles/gps-trackers>



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## Sexual Behaviors

### Causes

- Physical
- Desire to love and be loved

### Response

- Maintain dignity
- Hold boundaries
- Investigate for cause



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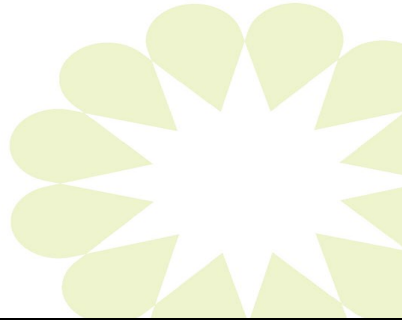


## “I want to go home”

Home as a feeling not a place

### Response

- Life story can be really helpful
- Engage
- Discovery



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## Shower Refusal

### Tools

- Timing
- Environment
  - Warm and well-lit bathroom
  - Warm bathrobe and towels
  - Grips and grab bars and shower seat in bathroom for safety
  - Comfortable water temperature
- Approach



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## Tools for Preventing Behaviors

- Effective communication
- Using a person's life story
- Take 5 to save 20



## Tools for Preventing Behaviors

### Living in their reality

- Do not argue
- Provide comfort
- Focus on feelings and less on spoken words





## Support

- Southern Maine Agency on Aging Support Groups: <https://www.smaaa.org/events.html>
- Alzheimer's Association online Community Forum and local Support Groups: <https://www.alz.org/help-support/community/support-groups>
- Southern Maine Agency on Aging Huddle Sheet



## Meaningful Engagement

### Benefits

- Provides life with meaning
- Prevents challenging behaviors
- Provides an opportunity to bond with your care recipient
- Maintains skills
- Helps with mood and sleep





### Family Caregiver Support Huddle Sheet- Behaviors

Challenging Behavior- what happened	Date/ Time	Potential Triggers- Physical	Potential Triggers- Environmental	Caregiver Approach	Care Recipient Response

#### Huddle Documentation Key

- What happened- record the action of the behavior
- Date/time
- Potential triggers-physical
  - Pain; Med changes; Unmet needs- bathroom, thirst, uncomfortable clothing etc.
- Potential triggers- environmental
  - Noises, location, specific person
- Caregiver approach
  - What did the caregiver do to redirect the care recipient?
- Care recipient response
  - How did the care recipient respond to this redirection?



## Family Caregiver Support Huddle Sheet- Behaviors

### STEPS FOR ADDRESSING BEHAVIORS

#### **REDIRECT:**

During a challenging behavior never argue but instead try to calm your loved one down through redirection, by looking to another topic or activity.

#### **RECHANNEL:**

Knowing your loved one's life history and interests, rechannel behavior to routines or hobbies. Rechanneling is taking a negative action and finding a positive way for that person to use that action. Rechannel the person to another task with the same sense of urgency or importance.

#### **HUDDLE:**

After a challenging behavior, contact your PCP for a thorough medical evaluation for your loved one. Documentation of behaviors can be helpful for your provider. Reach out to family or friends that you trust for support and brainstorm possible ways to prevent or assist with the behavior. Support groups can also be helpful for discussion.





## Let's meet Sue

- Mother
- Wife
- Nurse
- Gardener
- Loves to cook
- Walks alone every morning
- Volunteers
- Evening news



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## Meaningful Engagement

Still able to learn new skills  
"Use it or Lose it"  
It's ok to try to new activities or tasks!  
It doesn't have to be done "right"  
"No" is an easy answer



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## Acts of Purpose

### Jobs/Tasks around the Home

- Cleaning or organizing silverware
- Folding (sheets, clothes, napkins, matching socks)
- Sorting/organizing
- Meal prep- measuring and pouring
- Washing or drying dishes
- Sweeping



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## Meaningful Engagement

### Activities

- Physical
  - Walk outside, stretching, chair yoga, tai chi, community classes
- Emotional
  - Music, photo books, magazines, name that tune, hand massages, animals, crafts, feeding birds, gardening
- Social
  - Community activities- church, go to lunch; write or make cards for family/friends, host tea/coffee
- Cognitive
  - Games or puzzles, join a book club together, finish the phrase, read book aloud
- Stimulate the senses & outdoor activities



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## Supporting others with Visits

Family/friends may have a hard time with visits

- A good visit doesn't need a lot of words
- Look at photos or magazines together, conversation cards

Amazon: Shadowbox Press

<https://www.amazon.com/stores/SHADOWBOXPRESS/SHADOWBOXPRESS/page/AD80C013-F718-476F-983D-B8821D635154>



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## Meaningful Engagement

Set your care recipient up for success

- Have materials prepared
- Remove hazards or frustrations
- Plan for a good time of day
- Get the person started
- Break into simple steps
- Provide support during activity
- Learn from mistakes

Teepa Snow:  
Meaningful Activities  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Ek04qjT-xQ>



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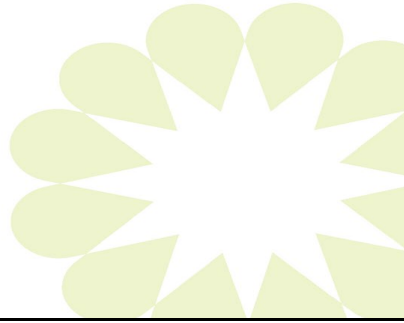
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## Support is Essential

- Adult Day Centers
- Local Support Groups
- Companion Care
- Friends and Family



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