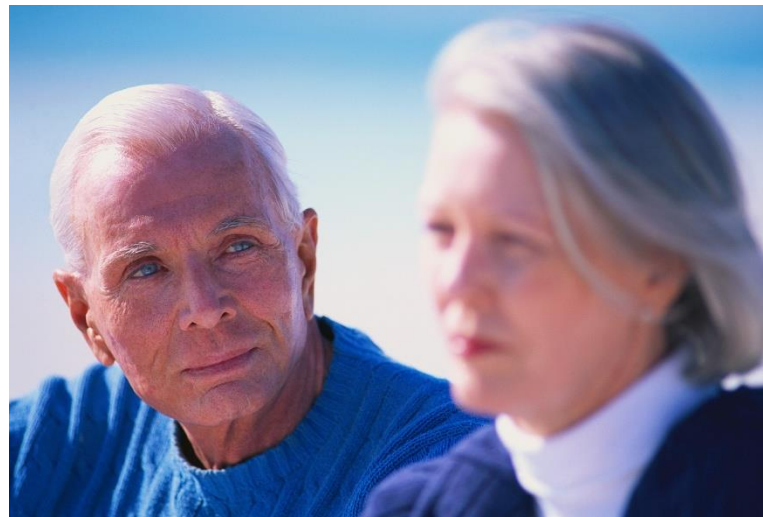


Understanding Changing Behaviours in People with Dementia



Introductions

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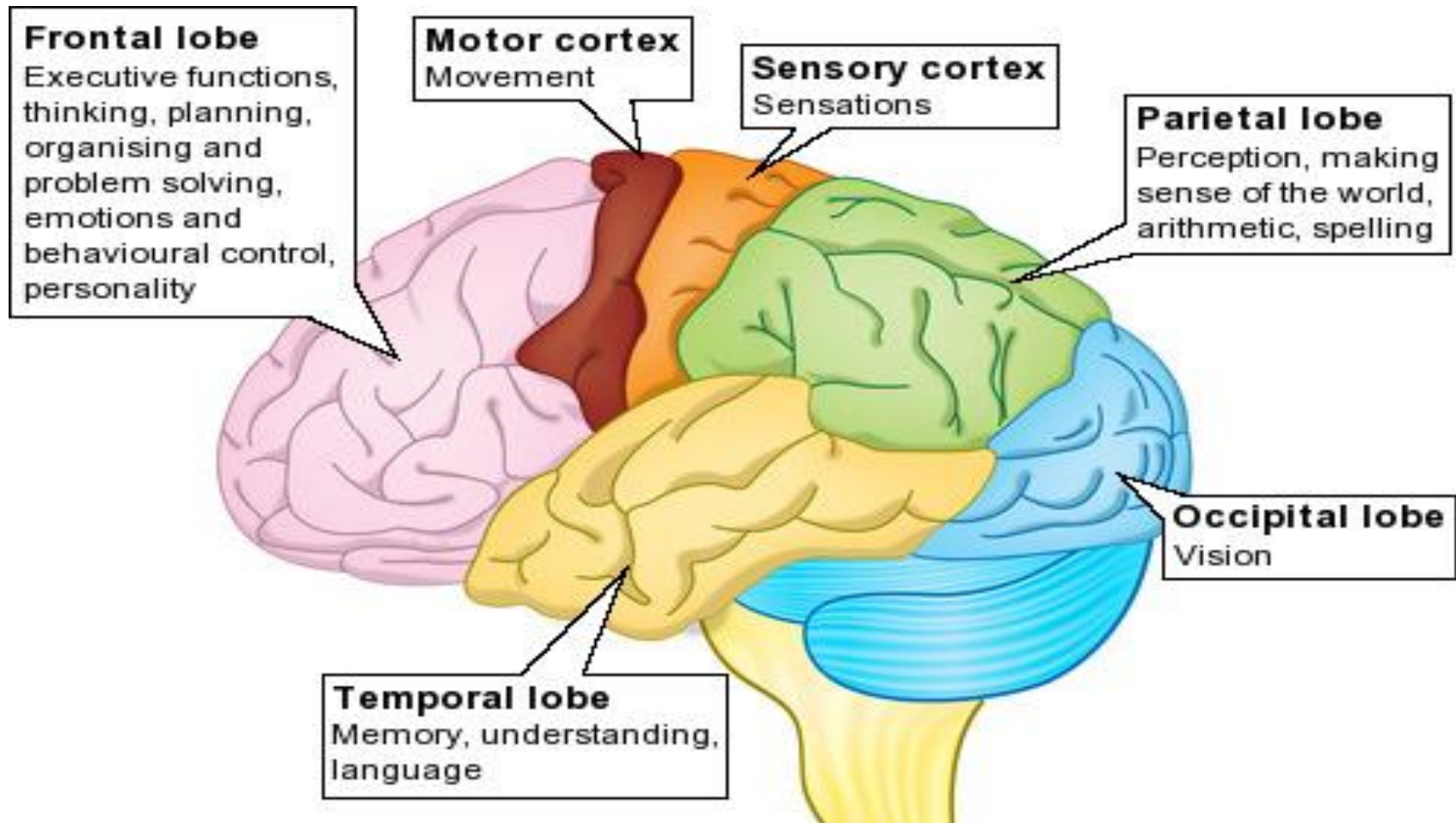


- What are some of the behaviours you encounter when caring for a person living with dementia?

- All behaviour has meaning
- Behaviour is a way for a person to communicate what they are experiencing

- The observations you make are important – ask what has changed?
 - Physical
 - Intellectual
 - Emotional
 - Capabilities
 - Environment
 - Social

Dementia and the Brain



The Affects of Dementia

- The lived experience of the person with dementia is **impacted by 5 area's** of his or her life:
- Personality
- Life story
- Disease process and area of brain involved
- Social determinants – culture, income, education, relationships
- Physical Health – pain, illness, vision, hearing, mobility, fatigue, medications

Behavior changes

- Very common
- Often have triggers

Stress

Stimulation

Responsive Behavior

- Used to describe the challenging behaviors people with dementia may exhibit

Remember:

- Actions, words and gestures (behavior) of people with dementia are **a response** to their current environment

Factors that can lead to behavioural changes:

- Memory loss
- Problems with Orientation
- Problems with Communication
- Emotional Vulnerability
- Unsettling Environment
- Unsuitable Activities

Responsive Behaviors

Are Increased by:

- Task orientation
- Removing control
- Not engaging fully
- Not responding to emotion or intended meaning
- Testing
- Arguing

Memory Loss

- The person may have difficulty:
 - identifying everyday objects and their surroundings
 - understanding the passage of time
 - may create stories to explain things that don't make sense to them
 - recognizing their own reflection
 - recognizing family or friends



Ways to Respond:

- Enjoy the times when the person has “crystal moments.”
- Relive the past with the person.
- Exchange making connection through cognitive processes for sensory stimulation via music, scent or touch.



Ability to Communicate

- The person finds it difficult to:
 - express their thoughts in speech
 - understand conversations and activities around them
- The person may repeat words or cry out.
- The person's message can often be found in their actions.



Communication Strategies:

- Reduce distractions
- Face to face
- Tone and Body Language
- Clear and Concise
- Show and Talk
- Listen Carefully and Patience
- Account for Hearing and Vision problems

Physical Abilities

- The person's ability to walk, dress, feed themselves, use the washroom, care for personal hygiene and to engage in activities without assistance becomes impaired.



Ways to Respond:

- Remember that changes may be caused by a combination of dementia and other health concerns.
- Recognize that the person may now live in a care setting where help is available for personal care needs, allowing family caregivers to concentrate on their relationship with the person.

Behavioural Changes

- Disinhibited Behaviour
 - the person acts in a way that does not follow social rules
 - may include rude remarks, flirtatious actions, exposure and/or fondling of private areas of the body
 - may result from changes in the brain affecting judgement or triggers in the person's environment

Ways to Respond:

- Try not to over react.
- Give a lot of appropriate physical contact through touch and hugging.
- Provide other activities that will distract and/or engage the person positively.



Behavioural Changes

- Hallucinations
 - the person sees things that are not there
 - often the brain is misinterpreting everyday objects
 - may be the result of changes in the brain, infections, medication side effects and interactions or poor vision
 - may experience auditory hallucinations

Ways to Respond:

- Reassure the person if they are frightened.
- Acknowledge to the person that you understand they are seeing something even though you do not see it.
- Take the person to a well lit area.
- Check the situation for the cause of the person's perception.

Behavioural Changes

- Delusions & Paranoia
 - the person may become suspicious thinking that people are stealing things from them, that a partner has become unfaithful or that food is being poisoned

Ways to Respond:

- Avoid arguing.
- Try to respond to the person's underlying feelings.
- Don't take the person's comment personally.



Pacing/Wandering

- May result from:
- Searching
- Unfamiliar Environment
- Night – unable to sleep
- Task Related

Ways to Respond:

- Spend time with the person with dementia; join them as they walk
- Engage them in conversation
- Comfort the person who is showing emotional distress
- Be sure the person has comfortable shoes & clothing when walking

Sleep Disturbances

- The person with dementia may experience changes in their sleep pattern:
 - more frequent waking during the night
 - wandering, unable to lie still, calling out
 - drowsiness during the day and napping

Possible causes:

- brain changes caused by dementia
- Psychological or medical problems
- environmental causes

Ways to Respond:

If the person is awake and upset during the night:

- approach in a calm manner, provide reassurance, identify possible needs
- gently remind about the time, avoid arguing
- move to a comfortable area, recliner chair

Strategies for Prevention:

- medical check up, medication review
- adjustments to the environment
- encourage daily routines to promote sleep

Other Behavioural Changes

- Puzzling Behaviours:
 - Repetitive actions - rocking or other repetitive movement; repetitive questioning
 - Anxious behaviours - pacing or restlessness
 - Excessive hand activity
 - Shadowing

Ways to Respond:

- Approach the person in an adult manner.
- Provide a calm environment.
- Encourage repetitive motion that calms.
- Provide objects with interesting texture for person to touch.



Reactive Behaviours

- Verbal Outbursts
- Physical Outbursts

- Fright, Flight, Fight – the person feels threatened and responds reactively

Verbal Outbursts

Ways to Respond:

What might you try?

- Guide the person away from the stressful situation
- Music
- Respect the person & their feelings
- Ensure vision & hearing are checked regularly
- Make sure person is comfortable – clothes not too tight, person is not too hot or too cold
- Artful distraction- food or activity (without too many choices)

Physical Outbursts

Ways to Respond:

What might you try?

- Remove the person from stressful situations , person (s) or place - gently guide the person from the environment while speaking in a calm, reassuring voice
- Observe signs of pain/discomfort
- Approach the person slowly and from the front
- Artful distraction with favorite food or activity
- Simplify environment by reducing noise, number of people & clutter

Re-approach

- Can be effective if the person is refusing to participate in an necessary activity
- Simply coming back to the person later, could be 30 minutes or an hour or two or next day
- Also allows time for the caregiver to relax and readjust approach if needed
- If possible, someone else could try approaching the person, sometimes a “fresh face” can be helpful to the situation

Caregiver Plan for Changing Behaviour

- Things to consider:
 - Change – What has changed?
 - Cause – What triggered it? What was happening?
 - Meaning – Why is the person doing it?
 - Pattern – Has this happened before?
 - Best response – How can I help?
 - **Acknowledge the feelings of the person with dementia**

Tips for Success

“Instead of”

- *“Hi, how are you”*
- *“It’s time for your bath?”*
- *“Here, let me help you”*
- *“Come down the hall to breakfast”*
- *“You will enjoy this”*

“Powerful Phrases”

- *It is wonderful to see you.*
- *Can I help you freshen up?*
- *What if I give you a hand?*
- *May I invite you to breakfast...*
- *We are going to have so much fun.*

Behaviours NOT usually responsive to medications:

- Aimless wandering
- Inappropriate urination/defecation
- Perseverative behaviours
- Vocally repetitious behaviours
- Hiding/hoarding
- Eating inedible

Remember...

“The person with dementia is not **giving** you a hard time...The person with dementia is **having** a hard time”

Questions

Teepa Snow

- “Challenging Behaviour”
- [Click here to watch video](#)

