Dementia Toolkit: Using the Validation Approach To Communication

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Alzheimer's:  www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Wv9jrK-gXc

Cognition Includes:

- Memory
  - retaining information and using it later
- Executive Functioning
  - reasoning, problem solving, judgment
- Attention
  - focusing or concentrating on a single thought while ignoring distractions
- Language
  - verbal functions including: naming items, speech, recognition of speech, comprehension, reading, and writing
- Visual/Spatial Perception
  - Processing and interpreting the physical relationship of an object with other objects in our environment and with ourselves
Questions to ask ourselves:

- Are they really doing things on purpose?
- If they can’t reason, why are we constantly trying to reason with them?
- If they have poor attention, why do we expect them to sit still, complete a task, focus on a conversation?
- If they have difficulty with verbal communication, why do we insist on relying on it?
- If their memory is poor, why are we asking them to remember things?
Difficulty Communicating?

- Person with dementia because of the disease
- WE (the caregivers)
  - Communication detectives

Communicating Though Validation
- Recognizing & accepting another’s thoughts, feelings, & behaviors as credible/understandable
- Paying complete attention to another in a nonjudgmental way
- Being sensitive & responsive to another’s feelings/emotions (empathy)
- Normalizing emotional reactions/behaviors
- Understanding behavior as a reflection of personal history, reaction to their environment, & needs
- Using listening skills & empathy
- Does NOT mean agreeing or approving

Your VALIDATION Toolkit:
#1: Patience

"More the hurry, more the obstacles."

Welsh Proverb

Take time to Declutter

Mindfulness: paying attention to the present moment with intention, and letting go of judgments as if your life depends on it.

Centering

The present moment is the only moment available to us, and it is the door to all moments.

Chogyam Trungpa
#2: Listen

"Knowledge speaks, but wisdom listens."

— Jimi Hendrix

“Man’s inability to communicate is a result of his failure to LISTEN effectively.”

— Carl Rogers
Active Listening Skills

- Minimize distractions (internal and external)
- Keep an open mind
- Focus on what is being said – not on what you are going to say next
- Face the speaker
- Maintain eye contact
- Only give opinions/advice if the speaker ASKS for them
- Listening does NOT mean fixing anything
- Use reflective listening – repeat back what is said in a slightly different way
- Ask questions – who, what, when, where (stay away from why)
- Ask the opposites/extremes – “what if the opposite were true/what’s the worst thing about…”

Husband and wife at the elevator

- Problem: ignoring requests for attention/assistance

- Validation Principle: “The cat ignored becomes the tiger.” (Carl Jung)

- Validation Tools/Techniques: Empathy, Ask questions, mirror emotion
#3: Pay Attention to the Non–Verbal

“Apparently I have done something to upset you.”

Communication is:

Verbal and Non–Verbal exchanges of
- Thoughts
- Ideas
- Emotions
The majority of dementia communication is NON-VERBAL

Approximately 93%!!!

How do we know what others are thinking/feeling non-verbally?

We OBSERVE their:

- Voice
  - Tone/Inflection/Pressure
- Facial Expressions
- Body Language/Gestures
Resident needing a brief change

- Problem: Failing to see the world from their view.

- Validation Principle: Perception is reality; if it's their idea, they are more likely to follow it.

- Validation Tools/Techniques: Empathy, Observation, Look for the Need

Communication is:

Verbal and Non-Verbal exchanges of
- Thoughts
- Ideas
- Emotions
#4: Respond to Feelings/Emotions

i don't think.
i feel.

- Anger: Aggressive, furious, hostile, competitive, defensive, disgusted, disrespected, enraged, frustrated, hostile, jealous, mad, outraged, pressed, resentful, riveted
- Fear: Anxious, avoidant, cautious, concerned, fearful, frozen, insecure, intimidated, guarded, overwhelmed, panicked, stressed, tense, terrified, trapped, vulnerable, worried
- Sadness: Apathetic, depressed, disheartened, disappointed, disillusioned, embarrassed, grief-stricken, guilty, hurt, lonely, needy, raw, regretful, rejected, shameful, stuck, sad, weak
- Joy: Blissful, brave, confident, connected, ecstatic, energized, excited, friendly, happy, hopeful, loved, living, proud, powerful, real, right, relaxed, spiritual, strong, thankful, tough
Questions we ask ourselves:

- Are emotions good or bad?
- Is it humanistic to deny all emotions except for happiness?
- What happens when we bottle emotions?
Woman stuck between the doors

- Problem: giving reassurance instead allowing for the expression of feelings/emotions

- Validation Principle: All individuals deserve to be heard & their experiences are real to them.

- Validation Tools/Techniques: Empathy, Observation, Look for the Need

#5: Empathy

*em*pa*thy*  
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\text{the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.}
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Empathy

Empathy is about putting ourselves in another’s shoes and responding appropriately to their emotions
- “That must be __(insert emotion)__ too.”
- “That would make me __(insert emotion)__ too.”
- “I __(insert emotion)__ it when that happens.”
- Different from sympathy

“Sorry is a game that you play, not a thing that you say!”

Inside Out Clip:
#6: Never Argue

THE VOLUME OF YOUR VOICE DOES NOT INCREASE THE VALIDITY OF YOUR ARGUMENT.
-STEVE MARABOLI

Man convinced it is Sunday

- Problem: reality orientation

- Validation Principle: We are in THEIR world – it only frustrates them when we try to pull them back into ours.

- Validation Tools/Techniques: Ask questions, Ask the extremes, Get their input
#7: Ambiguity

Woman looking for her hairbrush

- Problem: playing 20 questions is aggravating (to both of you)

- Validation Principle: Just because I don’t know what she is talking about does not mean that she doesn’t

- Validation Tools/Techniques: Use the ambiguity back to them, Ask questions, Get their input
#8: Simplify

SIMPLECTY makes for LESS STRESS and MORE HAPPINESS.

positivevibe.me

What do we need to simplify?

- Environment
- Schedule – keep a routine
- Communications
  - Yes/no
  - One idea at a time
  - Break down tasks into smaller steps
  - Give step-by-step directions
  - Don’t give them too much information
The doctor appointment

- Problem: too much information is overstimulating and overwhelming
- Validation Principle: Overstimulation, like boredom, causes anxiety.
- Validation Tools/Techniques: matching/mirroring, ambiguity

#9: Input/Choices

"You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist."

Friedrich Nietzsche
“Sit Down”

- Problem: constantly telling them what to do and think affects self-worth

- Validation Principle: Everyone needs autonomy and choice

- Validation Tools/Techniques: empathy, look for the need

#10: Avoid the Negatives
Stay away from: no, can’t, shouldn’t, don’t, etc

Use inclusive terms like: “let’s”, “we”, “come”, “join”, etc

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The Office Manager/CEO

- Problem: constantly telling them what not to do affects self-esteem and self-definition

- Validation Principle: Everyone needs to be wanted/needed and to have a purpose

- Validation Tools/Techniques: empathy, look for the need
#11: Don't Lie

TELL A LIE
ONCE
AND ALL YOUR TRUTHS
BECOME QUESTIONABLE

"Where is my husband?"

- Problem: even "therapeutic lies" are harmful, destroys trust

- Validation Principle: Everyone has it within themselves to solve their own problems.

- Validation Tools/Techniques: empathy, reflective statements, ask questions, ask the opposite/extremes, reminisce
#12: Look for the need

Look into my eyes and hear what I'm not saying, for my eyes speak louder than my voice ever will.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:

- Physical
- Safety/Security
- Love/Belonging
- Esteem
- Act.
Resident wanting his money

- Problem: assuming that we know what the problem is and how to fix it

- Validation Principle: Oftentimes there is a deeper need – look below the surface.

- Validation Tools/Techniques: Empathy, Ask questions, reflective listening, asking the extremes

Gladys
Complete Toolbox:

- Patience
- Listen – don’t try to fix everything
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication/be observant
- Respond to the feelings – empathize
- Never argue – accept their realities
- Ambiguity
- Simplify your communications – use yes/no, one idea at a time, step by step instructions
- Avoid overstimulating them
- Ask for their input/offer choices
- Stay away from the negatives
- Honesty – don’t reality orient, but don’t lie either
- Look for the underlying need – physical/medical, safety/security, love/belonging, self-esteem

"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."

Mary Angelou
Any Questions?