



Managing Difficult Behaviors

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GOALS/OBJECTIVES: CONTENT

- ❖ Be able to identify the five “usual” causes of challenging behaviors
- ❖ Demonstrate skill in effectively communicating with people who have dementia
- ❖ Learn and utilize non-pharmacological techniques for managing challenging behaviors

GOALS/OBJECTIVES: TRAINING

- ❖ Be able to lead the audience in role-playing scenarios
- ❖ Identify the main techniques for managing behaviors and learn different ways of teaching them

DIFFICULT BEHAVIORS

- ❖ Occur in 50% of people with dementia
- ❖ Examples include: hitting, kicking, spitting, wandering, inappropriate sexual behavior, aggression

WHERE DO MOST DIFFICULT BEHAVIORS OCCUR?

- ❖ Bathroom
- ❖ Dining Room/Kitchen
- ❖ Bedroom
- ❖ Outside

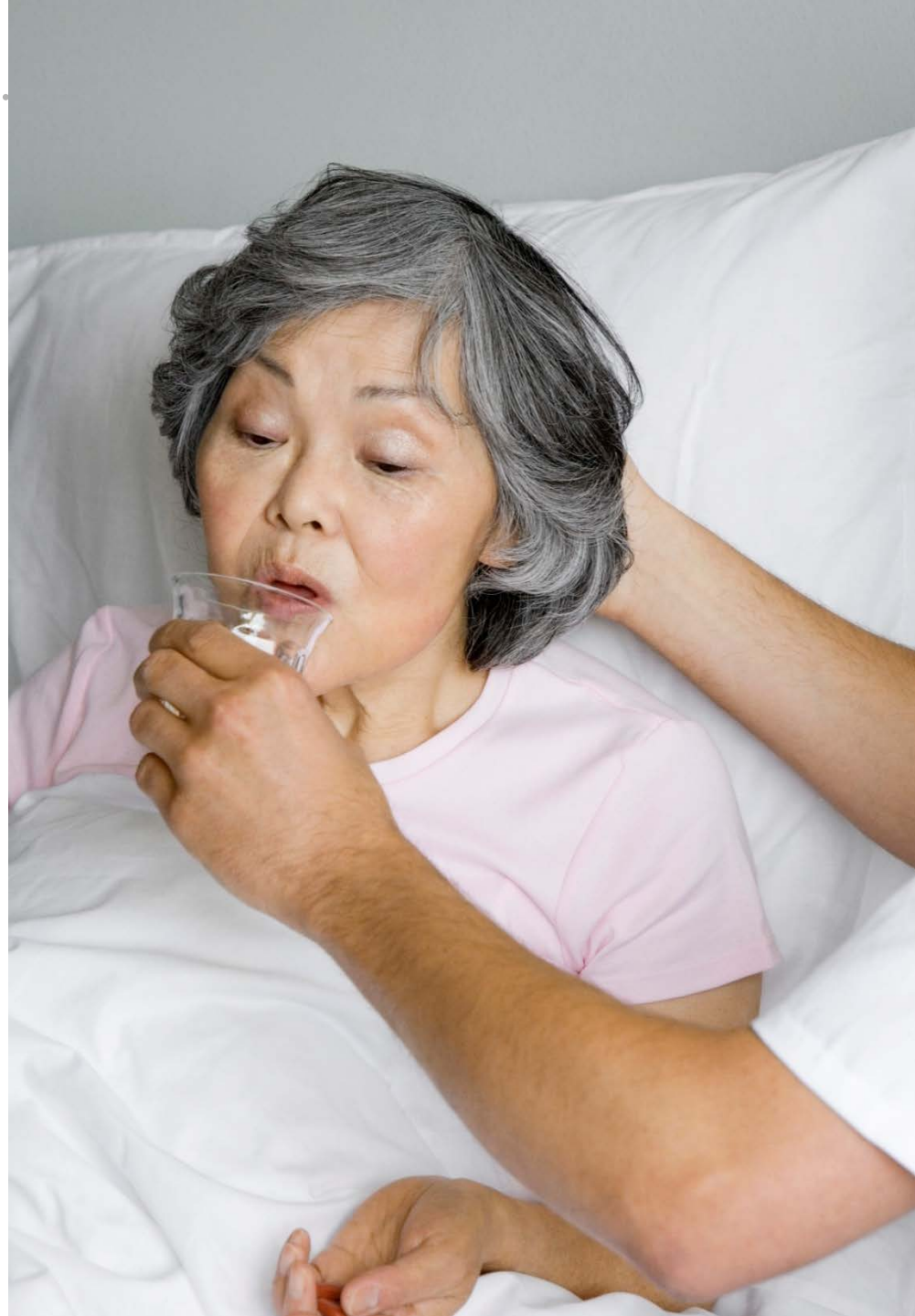
FIVE COMMON CAUSES

- ❖ Progressive Brain Disease
- ❖ Health Problems
- ❖ Environmental Causes
- ❖ Task-related Causes
- ❖ Communication Difficulties



- ❖ Alzheimer's Disease
- ❖ Parkinson's Disease
- ❖ Frontotemporal Dementia
- ❖ Dementia with Lewy Bodies
- ❖ Other Progressive Disorders

- ❖ Acute or chronic illness
- ❖ Medications
- ❖ Sensory deficits
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Pain or discomfort
- ❖ Fatigue



❖ Behavioral changes

- ❖ Agitation

- ❖ Irritability

- ❖ Confusion

- ❖ Refusal

- ❖ Client is often unable to communicate what the problem is

- ❖ Watch for non-verbal signs

- ❖ Behaviors may disappear after diagnosis and treatment

- ❖ Space is too large/confusing
- ❖ Insufficient orientation cues
- ❖ Poor sensory environment
- ❖ Unstructured/unfamiliar

❖ Behavioral challenges

- ❖ Anger/agitation

- ❖ Hiding/escaping

- ❖ Confusion

- ❖ Frustration

- ❖ Easy to change once discovered

- ❖ ROUTINE, ROUTINE, ROUTINE!

- ❖ Task is too complicated
- ❖ Task is unfamiliar
- ❖ Task is not modified for increasing
- ❖ Impairments

- ❖ Behavioral challenges: anxiety, refusal, irritability, anger, wandering
- ❖ Do one step at a time
- ❖ Accept that it might not be perfect
- ❖ Avoid criticizing



- ❖ Receptive or expressive aphasia
- ❖ Word-finding difficulties
- ❖ Easily distracted
- ❖ Vocabulary diminishes
- ❖ Relying on gestures instead of words
- ❖ Language barrier



❖ Behavioral challenges

❖ Anxiety

❖ Frustration

❖ Refusal

❖ Remember to follow Tips for Effective Communication





START WITH ASKING QUESTIONS

- ❖ When does the behavior occur?
- ❖ Does it involve the same person or people?
- ❖ What else is going on when the behavior occurs?
- ❖ What emotions is the person expressing?
- ❖ Has anything helped in the past?

- ❖ Forgetting/short term memory loss
- ❖ Wandering/Roaming/Exit-seeking
- ❖ Disorientation
- ❖ Anxiety/agitation/aggression
- ❖ Repetitive behaviors
- ❖ Loss of inhibition

INDICATIONS

- ❖ Doesn't recall recent activity
- ❖ Mixes up/doesn't remember names
- ❖ Difficulty retaining new information

CAUSES

- ❖ Progressive brain disease



STRATEGIES

- ❖ White boards/notes
- ❖ Photographs/scrapbooks
- ❖ Do not expect new learning
- ❖ Repetition
- ❖ PATIENCE, PATIENCE, PATIENCE





Is the cause of wandering related to health, the environment, or something else?

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- ❖ Discomfort, hunger, pain
- ❖ Need to use the restroom
- ❖ Fear, frustration, or boredom
- ❖ Environment is uncomfortable
- ❖ Doesn't recognize surroundings
- ❖ Searching for people or home from past



STRATEGIES

- ❖ Alleviate cause if possible
- ❖ Provide safe secure environment → ALLOW WANDERING
- ❖ Provide escort
- ❖ Purchase a “Safe Return” or “Medical Alert” bracelet
- ❖ Provide enough exercise during the day
- ❖ DISTRACTION, DISTRACTION, DISTRACTION!

INDICATIONS

- ❖ Inappropriate sexual behavior
- ❖ Inappropriate undressing
- ❖ Inappropriate language

CAUSES

- ❖ Progressive brain disease, but can be related to communication or task

STRATEGIES

- ❖ Gentle repeated reminders
- ❖ “Go with the flow”
- ❖ DISTRACTION
- ❖ DISTRACTION
- ❖ DISTRACTION!



Is the cause related to health, the environment or something else?

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Need to use the restroom
- ❖ Health/medical problem, i.e., UTI
- ❖ Overstimulation
- ❖ Fear
- ❖ Responding to changes in environment
- ❖ Responding to attitude of caregiver
- ❖ Task is too difficult



INDICATIONS

- ❖ Increased wandering
- ❖ Outbursts of anger
- ❖ Screaming
- ❖ Repetitive questions
- ❖ Refusal to engage in task/activity

STRATEGIES

- ❖ Look for source of anxiety (it can be unrelated to the task)
- ❖ Engage person when he/she is rested
- ❖ Tips for Effective Communication
- ❖ Reassurance
- ❖ Change environment
- ❖ DISTRACTION, DISTRACTION, DISTRACTION!!

GOLDEN RULE

- ❖ Don't argue!
- ❖ Saying “NO!” can lead to confrontation and an escalation in behavior. Avoid this and re-direct or distract when possible.
- ❖ Use a cooling off period as needed.

- ❖ Build up handles on utensils
- ❖ Non-breakable dishes, non-spill cups, straws, etc
- ❖ Velcro and snaps
- ❖ Hearing aids and glasses
- ❖ Don't change up seating arrangements or furniture

Is the cause of the repetitive behavior related to health, the environment of something else?

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- ❖ Side effects of medications
- ❖ Inability to communicate verbally
- ❖ Other anxiety provoking situations

INDICATIONS

- ❖ Repetitive movements or actions
- ❖ Repetitive words or phrases

STRATEGIES

- ❖ Keep the person's hands busy
- ❖ Tips for effective communication
- ❖ Use visual cues for orientation
- ❖ Ignore the behavior
- ❖ DISTRACTION, DISTRACTION, DISTRACTION!



OTHER ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

- ❖ Music therapy
- ❖ Aromatherapy
- ❖ Massage
- ❖ Pet therapy
- ❖ Watching videos of family or friends
- ❖ Walking
- ❖ Gardening

- ❖ People with dementia have difficulty learning, poor judgment, and a strong need to maintain control.
- ❖ What works today may not work tomorrow (but it might work on Saturday)!
- ❖ Most dementias will progress and the person's abilities WILL decline over time.
- ❖ Set realistic expectations for the person with dementia and yourself – you can't win them all!

- ❖ Activities and tasks should utilize intact knowledge and abilities.
- ❖ Structure and routine create consistency and a sense of security → highest level of functioning.
- ❖ Have a thorough medical exam, especially when behavior is new or changed.

PLEASE REMEMBER...

- ❖ Doing the same thing over and over again is **reassuring** and **NOT** boring for many people with dementia.
- ❖ You may not be able to change the behavior but you change your attitude towards it.



TAKE AWAYS FOR STAFF PROVIDING HANDS ON CARE

- ❖ Have a regular routine, keep it simple, and avoid change unless absolutely necessary
- ❖ Ask closed-ended questions or forced choice
- ❖ Provide regular verbal and visual cues as well as reassurance
- ❖ Focus on abilities that have been retained – use short statements or instruction
- ❖ Be flexible and insert humor when appropriate
- ❖ Do not try to reason with the person or confront/challenge them
- ❖ You can do it!