

Long Term Care  
Intensive Train the Trainer Series

## Managing Difficult Behaviors

# Assisting a Person with Dementia with Activities of Daily Living

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## Assisting a Person with Dementia with Activities of Daily Living

Teaching Cues	Content	Resources
<b>Title</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Assisting a Person with Dementia with Activities of Daily Living</b></p>	<p><b>Assisting the person with dementia with activities of daily living</b></p>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Module Overview: Assisting a person with activities of daily living can be challenging for care providers.</p> <p>This module will examine why activities of daily living are so important to the person with dementia. We will look at the various factors associated with doing the activity and how they can influence the experience.</p> <p>The objectives for this module are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognize the importance of activities of daily living for a person with dementia.</li> <li>2. Discuss how staff's approach can promote cooperation and enjoyment for the person with dementia.</li> <li>3. Identify factors related to the environment that influences a person's abilities to perform activities of daily living.</li> <li>4. Discuss strategies for making the task more manageable for the person with dementia.</li> </ol>	<b>Objectives</b>
<b>Introductory Comments</b>	<p>Activities of daily living are the most intimate and personal of activities. These small, comforting, lifelong routines are very important to each of us. The order in which you get dressed or bedtime rituals reflect your personal preferences.</p>	

<p><b>Discussion Questions</b> (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Let's stop and think about our own habits and preferences when it comes to skin and hair care, or how we look when we get dressed. What are some things that you find especially important or comforting when you think of your own personal rituals? How would you feel if you were unable to do this familiar and independent ritual? How would you feel if you could not have a bath for several days? Had dirty fingernails or matted hair? If you were unable to brush your teeth for a week?</p>	
<p><b>Brain changes</b></p>	<p>The lifelong routines are still important for the person with dementia. Caregivers can learn to tap into those routines and use them to make activities of daily living more successful. Because of these brain changes a person with dementia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ May not be able to recognize you, or the object you are holding.</li> <li>▪ Be unable to comprehend what you are trying to say to them.</li> <li>▪ Feel that an activity is unpredictable because of visual and spatial changes</li> <li>▪ Be unable to remain focused on a task because of a short attention span.</li> <li>▪ May know what you are trying to do, but be unable to start the task</li> <li>▪ May have problems with balance</li> <li>▪ A person with dementia may get tired very easily</li> </ul>	<p><b>Brain changes</b></p>
<p><b>Pain</b></p>	<p>Pain is often untreated for persons with dementia. The person may have pain, but unable to verbalize it. The person may not be able to recognize pain because of the changes in the brain from dementia. The person may become angry and strike out at the caregiver.</p>	<p><b>Pain</b></p>
<p><b>Nonverbal signs of pain</b></p>	<p>A person with dementia may express pain nonverbally. Some things to look for are:</p>	<p><b>Nonverbal signs of pain</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labored breathing</li> <li>• Mournful sounds</li> <li>• Fearful or distressed expression</li> <li>• Clenched fists</li> <li>• Rocking, hunched shoulders</li> <li>• Restlessness or withdrawal</li> <li>• Tugging at body parts</li> <li>• Threatening gestures</li> </ul>	
<b>Chronic diseases</b>	<p>Many older adults have chronic illnesses that may affect the person while trying to do an activity of daily living. These chronic diseases can affect range of motion, fine motor coordination, and balance.</p> <p>Arthritis-inflammation of the joints can cause pain and affect mobility</p> <p>Osteoporosis-this occurs when the smooth surfaces of the joints break down. Joints become stiff, painful and a person has limited range of motion.</p>	<b>Chronic diseases</b>
<b>Other chronic diseases</b>	<p>Congestive heart failure-the heart is weak and cannot pump enough blood. A person may become weak, short of breath and you may see swelling of the feet and ankles.</p> <p>Chronic lung diseases- like emphysema interfere with normal exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide. A person may have difficulty breathing and tire easily.</p> <p>Diabetes-when the pancreas fails to secrete enough insulin. A person can have symptoms if they have a high or low blood sugar.</p> <p>Low blood sugar can occur when a person has too much medication or not enough food. Symptoms are hunger, weakness, trembling confusion and cold clammy skin.</p> <p>High blood sugar can come from not enough medication, too much food or stress. Symptoms are weakness, drowsiness, thirst, and a sweet breath</p>	<b>Other chronic diseases</b>

<p><b>Procedural Memory</b></p>	<p>odor.</p> <p>There is something that is spared from damage until the advanced stages of dementia. This is known as procedural memory.</p> <p>Procedural memory can be defined as “remembering how.” This is the process where we acquire habits and develop skills that we eventually do automatically, almost like a reflex.</p> <p>Examples of these over learned responses are shaking hands, tying a shoe, or putting a spoon up to your mouth.</p> <p>When persons with dementia are allowed to use procedural memory, activities of daily living can help them feel comfortable and capable.</p>	<p><b>Procedural Memory</b></p>
<p><b>Why are activities of daily living important for the person?</b></p>	<p>Attention to grooming and hygiene helps us all to feel better.</p> <p>It helps a person with dementia keep in touch with his physical appearance; maintain body awareness and a sense of identity.</p> <p>We can promote a feeling of self control and maximize function if we tap into remaining skills and abilities.</p> <p>Hair and skin care, oral hygiene and manicures can be an intimate, social time. A time for sharing and caring on a very personal level.</p> <p>Sometimes we rush through these things to get them to a planned activity.</p> <p>We can think about activities of daily living as a 24-hour cycle of care.</p> <p>The more we tap into rituals &amp; lifelong habits, the more we enhance quality of life.</p>	<p><b>Why are activities of daily living important for the person</b></p>
<p><b>A person is not allowed to help</b></p>	<p>When people with dementia come into our work setting, assessment usually focuses on the person’s deficits, and all the things that they cannot do.</p> <p>As caregivers, we often assume that the person will not be able to help to get dressed or to shave themselves.</p> <p>When a person with dementia does not participate in their care, they may become resistant and angry.</p>	<p><b>A person is not allowed to help</b></p>

	<p>The person may become combative and be labeled as having difficult behavior.</p> <p>The more we do for the person, the more dependent they become. When we don't use remaining strengths and abilities, the person becomes more impaired.</p>	
<p><b>Excess disability.</b></p>	<p>Excess disability means that some factor is contributing to make the person more impaired than they are as a result of their dementia.</p> <p>We create excess disability by not putting on someone's glasses or their hearing aide.</p> <p>By not allowing the person to use their remaining strengths and abilities, we create dependence and a feeling of loss.</p> <p>The person with dementia is not given the opportunity to feel capable, and to get comfort from old, familiar tasks.</p>	<p><b>Excess disability</b></p>
<p><b>Discussion Question</b> (5 mins)</p>	<p>People who work with older adults have special qualities. What are some of the qualities you see in people who care for frail older adults? (Example: kindness, enjoy helping others)</p>	
<p><b>Caregivers are affected</b></p>	<p>Some of the qualities of caring &amp; dedication can make us want to help too much.</p> <p>We see ourselves as caring and efficient when the person is quickly dressed and the job is done.</p> <p>This can create a lot of stress when the person resists being efficiently managed, &amp; caregivers can spend more time if the person becomes agitated.</p> <p>When we are providing care for a person in any setting, the schedule can provide a lot of stress.</p> <p>We know that we only have a certain amount of time to get the person dressed, comb their hair and brush their teeth. When we are under pressure to get the job done, it can affect the quality of care.</p>	<p><b>Caregivers are affected</b></p>

	<p>We make the assumption that it will be faster if we do it alone. There are studies that show this is not true.</p> <p>When staff and the person with dementia are frustrated and upset after a task is completed, it is an unpleasant feeling for all involved.</p>	
<p><b>Caregiver's approach</b></p>	<p>Our approach can influence how care is provided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We can promote cooperation when we take the time to set the mood and tone for an activity of daily living.</li> <li>▪ When we approach the person from the front and speak their name, they will not be startled.</li> <li>▪ One caregiver alone will provide less stimulation. If another is needed to assist, they can stay out of the visual field of the person with dementia and hand things to the main caregiver.</li> <li>▪ Permanent assignments create an opportunity for staff to really get to know the person's preferences.</li> <li>▪ We can spend a few moments visiting and talking about things meaningful to that person, such as music or a favorite pet.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Caregiver's approach</b></p>
<p><b>Our approach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The way we talk, and our body language should show respect for that person as an adult. We avoid talking to the person as a child.</li> <li>▪ Show the person cues to help them figure out what is expected. If you are helping someone to get dressed in the morning, we can open the shades and talk about the day. We can introduce the idea of getting dressed by showing the clothing that will be worn. A person with dementia can often choose between two outfits or sweaters if we give them a choice.</li> <li>▪ We can avoid clutter by keeping only the clothes they wear during that season in the closet. Being organized is very important. The person with dementia can become distracted while you are looking for things during care.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Our approach</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Short sentences and cues can help the person participate. We can use gestures to highlight what we want to do. For example, we can tell the person we would like to help them brush their hair. We can show them the brush, and make the motion of brushing. We can give them a brush to use while we use another.</li> <li>▪ A gentle touch on the hand might be enough for the person to lift their arm and begin brushing their hair.</li> <li>▪ We can help the person know that the activity is over by giving the person a hug or saying thank you.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>The environment</b></p>	<p>When assisting a person with activities of daily living, the environment can influence how well a person can perform.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The person with dementia depends on the environment to give them familiar cues. It helps the person to figure out what they are supposed to be doing.</li> <li>▪ If there is poor lighting, a person may not be able to recognize the piece of clothing, or the shoes you are helping them to put on.</li> <li>▪ The person may not be able to pick out the white clothing lying on the white bedspread because of a lack of contrast.</li> <li>▪ Excess clutter can contribute to confusion. When you are trying to help the person brush their teeth, there may be lotion, soap, a hairbrush or a washcloth on the sink top. They offer confusing cues and distract the person from what you are trying to do.</li> <li>▪ If there is excessive noise in the environment, the person may become confused or irritated.</li> <li>▪ A small area that provides privacy may help the person to feel more comfortable. Modesty is very important to many older adults, and we can show respect by offering a quiet, private place for personal care.</li> </ul>	<p><b>The environment</b></p>



<p><b>Enhancing the environment</b></p>	<p>Persons with dementia have difficulty perceiving their environment. They need the environment to be predictable and constant.          Changing the furniture around can be very disorienting and make a person more at risk for falling.          The stairs and floor painted a different color than the walls helps to avoid confusion.          Floors that are free of patterns or design help a person with visual spatial challenges.          Because of brain changes, the person may not be able to judge distances accurately.          A large room without contrast can be overwhelming.          A person with dementia can be cold even if the room seems warm to you.</p>	<p><b>Enhancing the environment</b></p>
<p><b>The task</b></p>	<p>Everything we do with a person with dementia is an activity.          When a person is having difficulty, it may be the task or activity causing the problem.          It can be too complicated, or the person may not recognize what you are trying to do. There are some questions we can ask ourselves:</p>	
<p><b>Can the person see and hear me?</b></p>	<p>Can the person see and hear me?          Are they wearing their glasses and hearing aide, or are the lights bright enough?</p>	<p><b>Can the person see and hear me?</b></p>
<p><b>Is the person able to understand what you are trying to do or say?</b></p>	<p>Is the person able to understand what you are trying to do or say?          Do they recognize the toothbrush?          Can they tell where the toothbrush is in space?          Is there contrast between the sink, the floor and the wall, so the person can get cues that tell them they are in the bathroom and it is time to brush their teeth?</p>	<p><b>Is the person able to understand what you are trying to do or say?</b></p>

<p><b>Is the person able to process the information you are trying to give them?</b></p>	<p>Is the person able to process the information that you are giving them?          Are you giving the person cues by using gestures?          Are you using words that are familiar?          Does the person have adequate time to respond to your cues?</p>	<p><b>Is the person able to process the information you are trying to give them?</b></p>
<p><b>How have brain changes from dementia affected the person's ability to participate in an activity?</b></p>	<p>How have brain changes from dementia affected the person's abilities?          Can the brain tell the body what to do?          Is the person having trouble getting started?          Can they verbally express themselves?</p>	<p><b>How have brain changes from dementia affected the person's ability to participate in an activity?</b></p>
<p><b>What physical challenges affect the person's ability to participate in an activity?</b></p>	<p>What physical challenges affect a person's ability to participate?          Are you trying to do something that causes pain from arthritis?          What about their range of motion, and fine motor skills?          Are you giving them enough time to rest between steps if fatigue is a problem?</p>	<p><b>What physical challenges affect the person's ability to participate in an activity?</b></p>

<b>How do we know?</b>	<p>Sometimes it is hard to know a person's remaining strengths and abilities. The families can provide information about past patterns, preferences and habits that can be incorporated into care.</p> <p>We can try to see what a person can do by themselves with minimum cuing.</p> <p>We can note what parts of the task a person has trouble doing.</p> <p>Assessing a person's mood while you work together and look for nonverbal cues.</p> <p>If the person becomes agitated, we might be asking them to do too much, and need to break the task down into manageable steps.</p> <p>Our assessment of the person's abilities should be ongoing.</p> <p>Abilities may fluctuate from day to day for people with dementia.</p>	<b>How do we know?</b>
<b>Watch for changes</b>	<p>Some days they may be able to participate more than others.</p> <p>If there is a dramatic change over a short period of time, the person may be sick or have an infection.</p> <p>Sudden changes in abilities or mental state should be evaluated for a medical cause.</p> <p>We might be surprised by what a person can do. It is important to give them the opportunity.</p> <p>You might find that the person really can tie their own shoe, or a man can shave himself if given the chance.</p>	<b>Watch for changes</b>
<b>Some won't help</b>	<p>Sometimes a person may refuse to help with activities of daily living saying that the caregiver needs to do everything. The caregiver may suspect that the person is more capable and is acting helpless. When this happens, we can think about the need being expressed.</p> <p>Was being helpless a lifelong coping mechanism?</p> <p>Is the person depressed and uninterested in care?</p>	<b>Some won't help</b>

<b>Most important</b>	Good dementia care means that the person comes first before the task. We always remember that the relationship is more important than getting the job done.	<b>Most important</b>
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## Resources

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The Eastern Michigan University Alzheimer's Education Program.

## Managing Difficult Behaviors

Assisting a Person With Dementia  
with Activities of Daily Living

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## Objectives

1. Recognize the importance of activities of daily living for a person with dementia.
2. Discuss how staff's approach can promote cooperation and enjoyment for the person with dementia.
3. Identify factors related to the environment that influences a person's abilities to perform activities of daily living.
4. Discuss strategies for making the task more manageable for the person with dementia.

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## Brain Changes

- May not recognize you or object
- Not comprehend what you are saying
- Visual and spatial changes
- Short attention span
- Unable to start
- Problems with balance
- Fatigue

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### Pain

- Untreated in many people with dementia
- May be unable to verbalize that they have pain
- May not recognize pain because of changes in brain from dementia
- Can strike out at the caregiver

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### Nonverbal Signs of Pain

- Labored breathing
- Mournful sounds
- Fearful or distressed expression
- Clenched fists
- Rocking, hunched shoulders
- Restlessness or withdrawal
- Tugging at body parts
- Threatening gestures

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### Chronic Diseases

- Limited range of motion
- Difficulty with fine motor coordination
- Problems with balance
- Arthritis-inflammation of joints
- Osteoporosis-smooth surfaces of joints break down

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### Other Chronic Diseases

- Congestive heart failure-weakened heart
- Chronic lung disease-difficulty breathing
- Diabetes-failure to secrete insulin
- Low blood sugar-hunger, weakness, confusion, cold clammy skin
- High blood sugar-weakness, drowsiness, thirst, sweet breath odor

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### Procedural Memory

- Defined as “remembering how”
- Spared from damage until late in dementia
- Acquired habits and skills from lifetime
- Automatic, like a reflex
- Shaking hands
- Tying shoes
- Putting a spoon up to your mouth

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### Why are activities of daily living important for the person?

- Attention to grooming makes us feel good
- Maintain body awareness
- Sense of identity
- Promote feeling of self control
- Maximize function-use remaining strengths and abilities
- Activities of daily living are a 24-hour cycle of care.

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### Person Not Allowed to Help

- Assessment focus on person's deficits
- Can assume person not able to help
- May become resistant and angry
- May become combative
- Creating dependence
- Not using remaining strengths and abilities

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### Excess Disability

- Some factor that is contributing to make the person more impaired that they are as a result of dementia.
- Examples are not having the person wear their glasses or their hearing aide.
- Creates dependency
- A feeling of loss

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### Caregivers Are Affected

- Want to help too much
- Stress created when the person resists care
- Stress created by need to get the jobs done
- Stress created by schedules
- Assume that it is faster to do it all yourself

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## Caregiver's Approach

- Set the mood and tone before introducing activity
- Approach from front, use their name
- One caregiver at a time
- Permanent assignments help
- Incorporate life story into care for meaningful interactions

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## Our Approach

- Treat as adult with respect
- Verbal and nonverbal cues
- Be organized
- Short sentences
- Gentle touch can help to get the person started
- Finish with a hug or thank you

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## The Environment

- Familiar cues
- Lighting
- Contrast
- Clutter
- Noise
- Privacy

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## Enhancing the Environment

- Make predictable and constant
- Don't move furniture
- Contrasting stairs, walls and floors
- No busy patterns on floor or fabric
- Give cues for judging distance
- Large rooms can be overwhelming
- Person with dementia may be cold

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Can the person  
with dementia see  
and hear me?

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Is the person  
able to understand  
what you are  
trying to do or say?

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Is the person able to process the information you are trying to give them?

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How have brain changes from dementia affected the person's abilities?

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What physical challenges affect the person's ability to participate in an activity?

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### How do we know?

- Families and friends can contribute info
- Try to see what a person can do
- Note what parts the person can't do
- Assess mood and nonverbal cues
- May have to break task down into steps
- Fluctuating abilities

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### Watch for Changes

- Some days not able to participate in care
- Watch for dramatic changes over short period of time and evaluate for medical cause
- Let the person surprise you

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### Some Won't Help

- May refuse to participate in care
- Caregiver may think person more capable
- Acting helpless
- What need is being expressed?
- Is helplessness a lifelong coping mechanism?
- Is the person depressed?

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## Most Important

- Good dementia care means the person comes first
- The relationship is more important than the task

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