

Long Term Care
Intensive Train the Trainer Series

Managing Difficult Behaviors

Enhancing the Bathing Experience

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Presented by:

Institute of Gerontology
Wayne State University

In partnership with:

Lutheran Social Services of Michigan

The development of this training manual has been funded by a grant from the Michigan Department of Community Health Long Term Care Initiatives

Enhancing the Bathing Experience

Teaching Cues	Content	Resources
Title	Enhancing the Bathing Experience	Enhancing the Bathing Experience
	<p>For many people with dementia and their caregivers, a bath or shower can be a painful and unpleasant experience. This module will explore why the bath can be so stressful. We will look at the different factors involved and present strategies that can make the experience more pleasant for everyone.</p> <p>The objectives for this module are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify factors related to the person with dementia that influence the bathing experience. 2. Describe strategies for staff to promote cooperation and enjoyment of the bath 3. Describe the challenges in the task of bathing 4. Recognize the importance of the environment in which the bath or shower is being provided. 	
Objectives		Objectives
Introductory Comments	Bathing is an extremely personal experience. Everyone has certain things that are important to them when they take a bath.	
Discussion Question (5 minutes)	Let's stop for a moment to think about ourselves. What is it that we enjoy about a bath or shower? If you were unable to give yourself a bath, what would be important for the person to know who would have to help you? (Example: temperature of water, order in which things get done, special type of lotion)	

<p>The person with dementia</p>	<p>Persons with dementia live from moment to moment. They depend on predictable routines and continuation of old habits to give them cues about what is going on around them. The brain changes from dementia make their world even more unpredictable. The person may not be able to understand the words you are saying. The things you do during a bath or shower may be misunderstood.</p>	<p>The person with dementia</p>
<p>The person</p>	<p>The person may be unable to tolerate the cold and discomfort of the bath and become angry and irritated. Modesty and privacy are very important for older adults, and the feeling of being vulnerable can lead to agitation and combativeness. When a person is in pain, or very fatigued the bath can be very unpleasant. The person may think they have already had a bath and refuse. All these things make our care very challenging.</p>	<p>The person</p>
<p>Strategies for the person</p>	<p>Each bath needs to be tailored to the person's lifelong routines and preferences. We need to know their remaining strengths and abilities so that they can assist with the bath and feel some control. Above all, we remember that the comfort of the person with dementia is more important than getting the job done.</p>	<p>Strategies for the person</p>
<p>The caregiver's approach</p>	<p>Taking a few minutes to set the mood and tone for a bath can do a lot to promote cooperation. Approach the person from the front using their name. Be relaxed, with a smile and calm attitude. Spend some time just visiting. Offer the person a drink and talk about something meaningful to that person, such as a favorite pet or photograph. Provide cues that it is time to take a bath or shower.</p>	<p>The caregiver's approach</p>

<p>Approach strategies</p>	<p>Tell the person everything that is happening step by step. Ask them to test the water to see if it is warm enough. Offer verbal cues and allow the person to assist in any way that they are able. Offer them a washcloth to hold even if they cannot assist. Help the person cover his face with a washcloth when washing their hair. This can be very reassuring. If two caregivers are needed for assistance, only one person should talk to the person with dementia while the other stays out of their vision. This cuts down on stimulation and may help the person to feel less vulnerable. If the person is anxious, we can start by spraying the person's feet and gradually move to the more sensitive areas around the trunk.</p>	<p>Approach strategies</p>
<p>Discussion question (5 minutes)</p>	<p>What strategies have you used that makes a bath or shower more pleasant for the person with dementia? (Example: letting person test water, offering ice cream after bath)</p>	
<p>The task of bathing</p>	<p>When we think of all the steps involved in a bath or shower, it is very complicated. We need to plan the activity with as many familiar rituals as possible. Keep in mind that many older adults did not bathe every day. When we focus on the person and not getting the task done, the dignity of the person with dementia will be preserved. The person may not be able to do all the steps of a bath, but can assist with parts.</p>	<p>The task of bathing</p>

<p>Breaking down the task</p>	<p>Break the bath down into manageable steps and involve the person as much as possible. Sometimes if we get a person started with a washcloth, they can take over and participate. Tell the person step by step what you are going to do. Go through the steps of the bath at a pace that the person can tolerate will promote cooperation. Sometimes if we are anxious, we rush even faster to get the bath over with. This can make the person more agitated. Protecting the person’s privacy will help the person remain focused on the bath. Remember above all, that the bath is an activity. The person with dementia is more important than getting the job done. If the person becomes too agitated, other options like a bed bath may need to be considered.</p>	<p>Breaking down the task</p>
<p>The bathroom environment</p>	<p>There are many things about the bathroom that can affect a person. Because of the brain damage that occurs with dementia, a person may have difficulty locating things in space, and be unable to recognize objects. There may be an echo in the bathroom that distorts sounds and promotes anxiety. The caregiver may feel she needs to shout over the sound of the water. If a person is cold, they may become agitated. The glare of the polished floor can be very disorienting. Geometric patterns on the floor can appear to be moving and a person may feel like they are going to fall.</p>	<p>The bathroom environment</p>
<p>Modifying the environment</p>	<p>Create a warm, cozy and comfortable atmosphere in our bathrooms. We can do something simple like changing the color of the towels. Look for ways to remove glare from the floor, walls and windows. Make sure the room is warm. The person may be cold even if the room</p>	<p>Modifying the environment</p>

	<p>feels warm to you. Lower the pitch of your voice and avoid shouting over the noise of the water. Use contrast in color for orientation. A white toilet on a highly polished white floor offers no cues and may promote anxiety when trying to get the person to sit down. Remove as much clutter as possible so that we can be efficient and minimize distractions.</p>	
<p>Break into small groups. Have them work on this question, then report back to the whole group. If possible, go into the bathroom and spend about 5 minutes answering the questions.</p>	<p>The purpose of this exercise is to look at the setting where the class is providing a bath or a shower. What are some of the things in the bathrooms where staff provide care that may be distracting to the person with dementia? Lighting, contrast, clutter? Does the bathroom look homey? What simple modification can we think of in the environment that may promote well being and increase a home like atmosphere?</p>	
<p>In conclusion</p>	<p>We have seen how the four factors of the person, the caregiver approach, the task of bathing and the environment can affect bathing. Paying attention to these factors can help create a more pleasant experience both for the person with dementia and the caregiver.</p>	<p>In conclusion</p>

Resources

- Barrick, A.L., Rader, J., Hoefler, B., Slaone, P., *Bathing Without a Battle: Personal Care of Individuals with Dementia* Springer Publishing Company, Inc New York, NY 2002
- Dwyer, S., Sloane, P., and Barrick, A.L., *Solving Bathing Problems in Persons with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders*, Terra Nova Films, Inc. 1995
- Robinson, A., and Spencer, B., *Developing Meaningful Connections with People with Dementia, A Training Manual*, Ypsilanti, MI Eastern Michigan University, 2002
- Robinson, A., Spencer, B., White, L., *Understanding Difficult Behaviors*. Ypsilanti, MI: Eastern Michigan University, 1994
- Weaverdyck, SE, *Assisting a Person with Dementia in Bathing: Suggestions for Direct Care Staff*. Satellite Training Programs for Caregivers of the Elderly, Michigan Partnership for Community Caring, 2000

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Objectives

1. Identify factors related to the person with dementia that influence the bathing experience.
2. Describe strategies for staff to promote cooperation and enjoyment of the bath
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4. Recognize the importance of the environment in which the bath or shower is being provided.

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The Person with Dementia

- Live moment to moment
- Depend on continuation of old habits and routine
- Brain changes from dementia make world more unpredictable
- May not be able to understand what you are saying to them
- May misunderstand what you are doing

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The Person

- Can get cold easily
- Modesty and privacy are important
- Person may be in pain
- Can get easily fatigued
- The person may think they already had a bath

Strategies for the Person

- Each bath or shower needs to be tailored to the person's lifelong preferences
- Know remaining strengths and abilities
- Help the person to feel in control
- Comfort of the person is more important than getting the job done

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The Caregiver's Approach

- Set the mood and tone
- Approach from the front using their name
- Smile and calm attitude
- Spend some time just visiting
- Offer the person a drink
- Provide cues that it is time to bathe

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Approach Strategies

- Provide privacy with towels
- Tell the person step by step
- Ask them to test the water
- Lower pitch of voice, don't shout
- Let them hold a washcloth and help
- Cover face with washcloth to wash hair
- One staff at a time
- Start with feet

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The Task of Bathing

- Lots of steps involved
- Use familiar rituals
- Many older adults did not bathe daily
- Focus on goal of providing a pleasant experience
- May not be able to do all the steps

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Breaking Down the Task

- Break into steps
- Help a person get started
- Tell the person what you are doing
- Go at a pace the person can tolerate
- Protect privacy so the person can focus on the bath
- If agitated, try partial bath or bed bath

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The Bathroom Environment

- Difficulty locating things in space
- Unable to recognize objects
- Echo in bathroom, noise from water
- Loud voices
- Cold temperatures uncomfortable
- Glare of lights, polished floor
- Geometric patterns disorienting

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Modifying the Environment

- Create warm, cozy atmosphere
- Look at lighting, temperature
- Lower the pitch of your voice
- Provide contrast
- Remove as much clutter as possible

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In Conclusion

- The person with dementia
- The caregiver's approach
- The task of bathing
- The environment
- All play a role in providing a more pleasant experience for the person and the caregiver
