Learning the Language of Dementia to Enhance Supported Decision-Making

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Agenda

- Introduction to Dementia
- How and Why Communication Changes
- Verbal vs. Non-Verbal Communication
- How to Connect
Dementia is not a disease.
It's an overall term that describes a group of symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities.

Alz.org
Core Mental Functions

- Memory
- Communication and language
- Ability to focus and pay attention
- Reasoning and judgment
- Visual perception
Causes of Dementia

**Reversible**
- Medication interactions
- Depression
- Thyroid problems
- Dehydration
- Vitamin deficiency
- And many more...

**Non-Reversible**
- Alzheimer's disease
- Vascular dementia
- Frontotemporal Dementia
- Lewy Body Dementia
- Parkinson's, Huntington’s
- And a few more...
What Changes?

- Finding the right word
- Describing an object rather than naming it
- Losing train of thought easily
- Speaking less often
- Difficulty in organizing words to make sense
Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

- Words
- Everything else:
  - Appearance
  - Voice – tone, pitch, volume, intonation
  - Facial expressions
  - Body position
  - Proxemicons
  - Haptics
How to Connect

- Set the stage...
- Slow down
- Eye contact
- Short sentences
- Repeat the exact same words
- Yes or no questions
- Try writing information down
- Patience
- Use non-verbal cues, gestures, etc.
- Watch for the person’s non-verbal communication
Thanks!!

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