Learning the Language of Dementia to Enhance Supported Decision-Making

Kim Grier
Managing Director
Grier Dementia Training

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
  - Proxemics
  - Haptics

How to Connect

- Set the stage…
- Slow down
- Eye contact
- Short sentences
- Repeat the exact same words

How to Connect

- Yes or no questions
- Try writing information down
- Patience
- **Use non-verbal cues, gestures, etc.**
- **Watch for the person's non-verbal communication**

Thanks!!!

Kim Grier

kimgrier@dementiatraining.ca

Dementiatraining.ca

404-432-1773

613-627-3215