

DEMENTIA CONVERSATIONS: COMMUNICATING WITH EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING

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And

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Connecting Throughout the Dementia Journey?

- Yes **You** Can
- Perspective
 - 16+ years
 - Even now
- Adapted from Alzheimer's Association, NIH, et al)

What is "dementia"?

- General term—troublesome memory and thinking problems
- Mostly caused by brain diseases, e.g. Alzheimer's



75 yr old brain

75 yr old brain w.
Alzheimer's disease

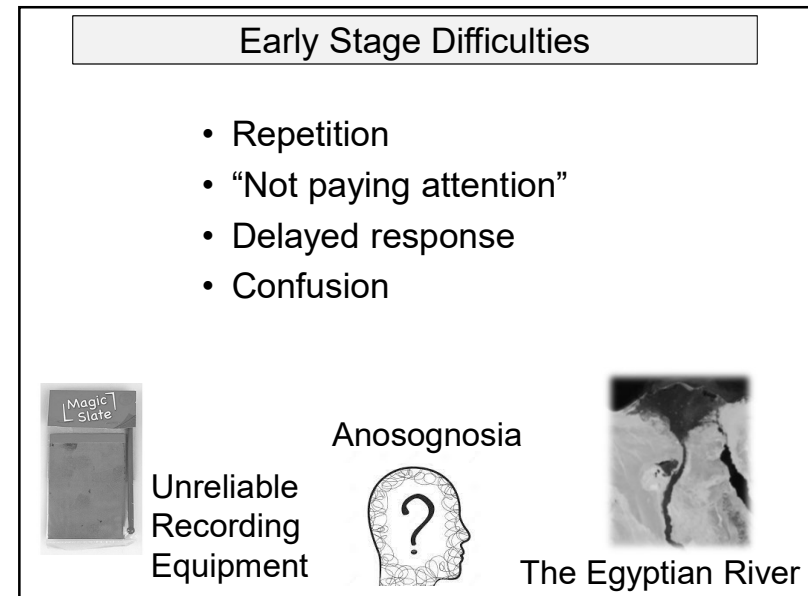
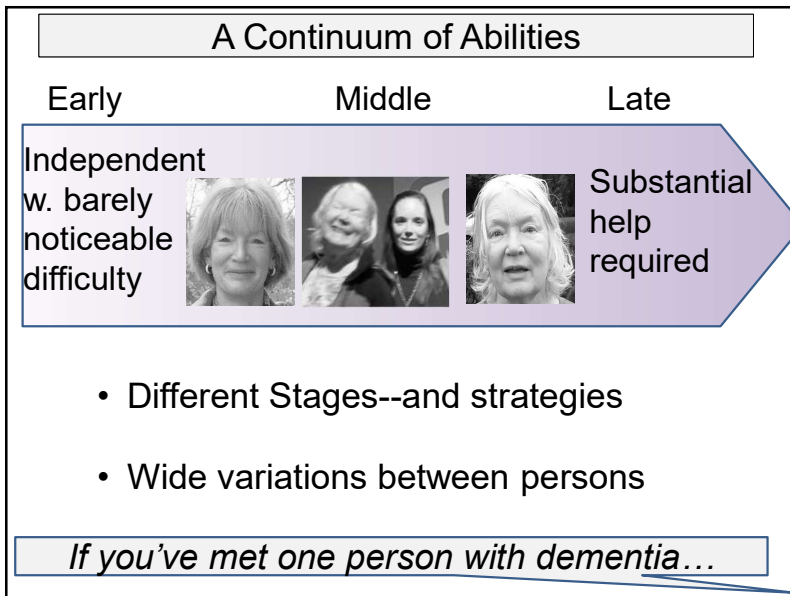
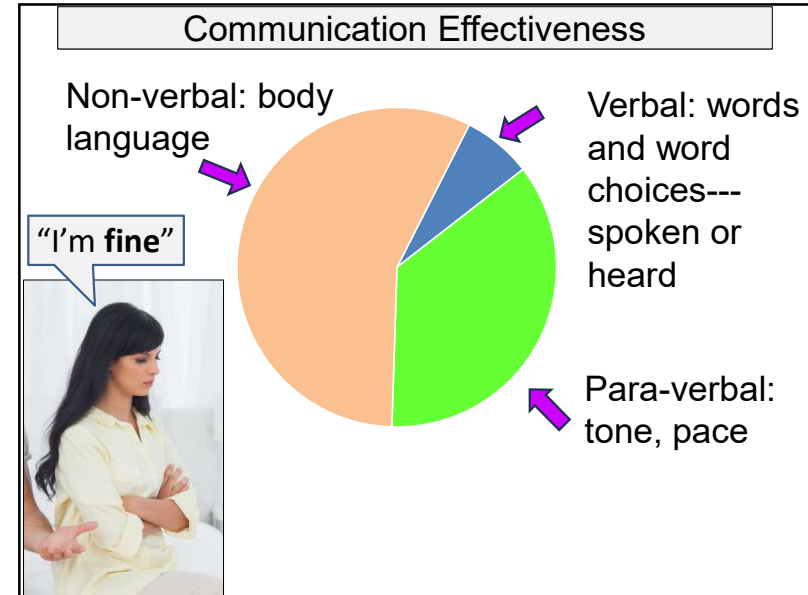
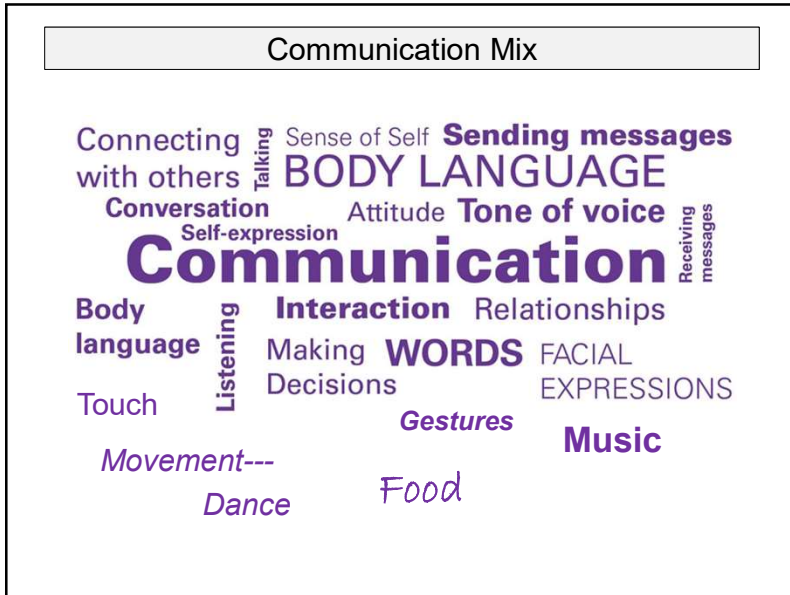
The Dementia Journey

Early Middle Late

◀ 8-10+ years ▶

Changes in:

- Abilities
- Communication
- "Behavior"



Connect, don't Correct

- ~~“She has to get it right”~~
- ~~“Don't you remember?”~~
- Heed Paul McCartney's words
- Interrupt only if.....
- Close enough....



It's about respecting, not inspecting

Talk TO not about



- They will notice the disrespect
- Pay attention to non-verbal channels

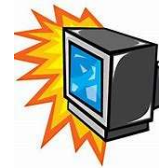
Learn to...

KEEP
IT
SHORT
SIMPLE
SLOW



Connection Tips

- Lessen distractions
- Back-check—"if I understand you right...."
- Use para-verbal and non-verbal reinforcements



In The Middle of The Journey

- Stuck in a new, strange, scary world



- “Here” and “Now” aren’t

Middle Stage Difficulties

- Word finding & substitutes
- Prolonged repetition
- Incomplete sentences
- Very delayed response, or none



Middle Stage Tips

- In front, eye level (field of view)
- Avoid negatives
- Respect their reality



“There’s some old lady in the bathroom”



Careful With Your Words

- Figuratives
- **Short** notes, easy icons



“Behaviors”?

- Communicating thru actions
 - “Wandering”
 - Agitation
 - Rummaging
- Always a message, a reason
- Not always clear, “logical”
- Seek the reason
- Respond to the message



Some Causes of “Behavior Changes”

- Altered perceptions
- “Unfamiliar” setting
- Physical discomfort
- Frustrating activity
- Emotional upset



What Behaviors Could Mean

“Wandering”: seeking---

- childhood home
- family member
- a snack
- the bathroom

Fidgeting:

- Pain
- Boredom
- Frazzled

Connect
Detect
Respect
Redirect
Lovingly lie
Go with flow

Much Later In the Journey

- Words gone---not the person
- Still taking it in, so
- Your words, your non verbals matter
- Other senses too

Late Stage Connection: Touch

- Human
- Friends
- Fabrics/objects



Late Stage Connection: Visual

- Not fussing over photos
- Picture cards, books



Late Stage Connection: Aroma, Taste

“Samplers” of

- Herbs, spices, oils, flowers
- Teas, or coffee beans.
- **Be careful!**



Fragrant hand lotions

Fragrant, memorable foods

BUT, things change



Late Stage Connection: Sound

- Poetry
- Music



Enduring Power of Music



Google: "Alzheimers + Ballerina"

"Speaking without Talking"

- They're there
- Still connecting
 - Birthday
 - Chocolate



Until The Last

- A Person
- To connect with
- You'll be amazed
- Nat King Cole got it right



Your Turn



Thank You!