



Beaver County Area Agency on Aging Cultivating Caregiver Wellness™

Communication and Behavioral Challenges of Caregiving for
Persons with Dementia or Memory Loss

Hope Grows
June, 2020

Hope Grows: Phyllis Rupert, MSEd Clinical Mental Health Counselling, NCC



- **Caregiver Connect**

- A collaborative project operationally with Jewish Association on Aging
- A cooperation with Chatham University for summary data and evidence based research component
- Charles Morris and Home Health Social Worker/Wellness Navigator
- Research to show correlation to admissions

- **Power Tools for Caregivers (PTC)**

- **Peer-to-Peer Caregiver Group Facilitation**

- **One to one consultations with caregivers, couples, and care receivers**

1. Polling Question for Participants



Are you a _____?

1. Professional Caregiver only
2. Family Caregiver only
3. Both a Professional and a Family Caregiver

2. Polling Question for Participants



I am aware of _____ (#)_____ situations in a week, where I face difficult behavior or communication challenges in my caregiving of persons with dementia or memory loss.

1. None
2. 1-3
3. 4-5
4. Too numerous to count

Memory Loss



- **Age related Memory Loss** – “Normal age-related memory loss doesn't prevent you from living a full, productive life.”
- **Mild Cognitive Impairment** -“...is the stage between the expected cognitive decline of normal aging and the more serious decline of dementia. It can involve problems with memory, language, thinking and judgment that are greater than normal age-related changes.”
- **Dementia** – “...describes a group of symptoms affecting memory, thinking and social abilities severely enough to interfere with your daily life. It isn't a specific disease, but several different diseases may cause dementia.”
- **Alzheimer's disease** – “... is a progressive disorder that causes brain cells to waste away (degenerate) and die. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia — a continuous decline in thinking, behavioral and social skills that disrupts a person's ability to function independently.

(Symptoms and causes, 2020, Mayo Clinic Staff, www.mayoclinic.org.)



Behavior

STAGES, SYMPTOMS, STEPS, AND
STRATEGIES

3. Poll Question for Participants



What types of behavior challenges do you find most difficult to address?

1. Verbal Impairments
2. Agitation
3. Lack of focus
4. Misplacing items
5. Lack of motivation
6. Inability to make decisions
7. Other _____

Cognitive and Psychological changes



Cognitive changes

- Memory loss
- Difficulty communicating or finding words
- Difficulty with visual and spatial abilities, such as getting lost while driving
- Difficulty reasoning or problem-solving
- Difficulty handling complex tasks
- Difficulty with planning and organizing
- Difficulty with coordination and motor functions
- Confusion and disorientation

Psychological changes

- Personality changes
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Apathy
- Inappropriate behavior
- Paranoia
- Agitation
- Hallucinations

Behavioral Disorders



Most Frequent Disorders:

- **Agitation**
- **Aggression**
- Anger
- Apathy or disinterest
- Confusion
- **Paranoid delusions**
- **Hallucinations**
- **Sleep disorders**, including nocturnal wandering
- Sun downing
- Pacing and Wandering
- **Incontinence**
- **Vocalizations or screaming**

(How to respond to anger in and aggression in dementia by Esther Heerema, November 24, 2019
<https://www.verywellhealth.com> and www.alzheimers.net)

Behavior Management



Reduce frustrations

- Schedule wisely. Establish a daily routine.
- Take your time. Anticipate that tasks may take longer than they used to and schedule more time for them.
- Involve the person.
- Provide choices.
- Provide simple instructions.
- Limit napping.
- Reduce distractions.
- [Model and take care of you]

Stages and the Caregiver Role



Stages and Caregiving Focus

- Taking in the diagnosis – Listening and Challenging
- Mild symptoms - Support and Empowerment
- Middle stages – Strategies and Calm
- Late stages – (Round-the-Clock) Care, Comfort, Aid

Caregiver Self-care Tools

- Pausing – Counting to 3
- Breathing – Being present and letting go of anger
- Meditation – 3 minute gratitude meditation
- Communication – “I” statements, Assertiveness
- Reframing and Redirecting – A different perspective

(Stages and Behaviors, 2020, Alzheimer's Association, <https://alz.org/help-support/caregiving>.)

4. Poll Questions for Participants



Are you conscious of your breath right in this moment?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure/ Don't Wish to answer



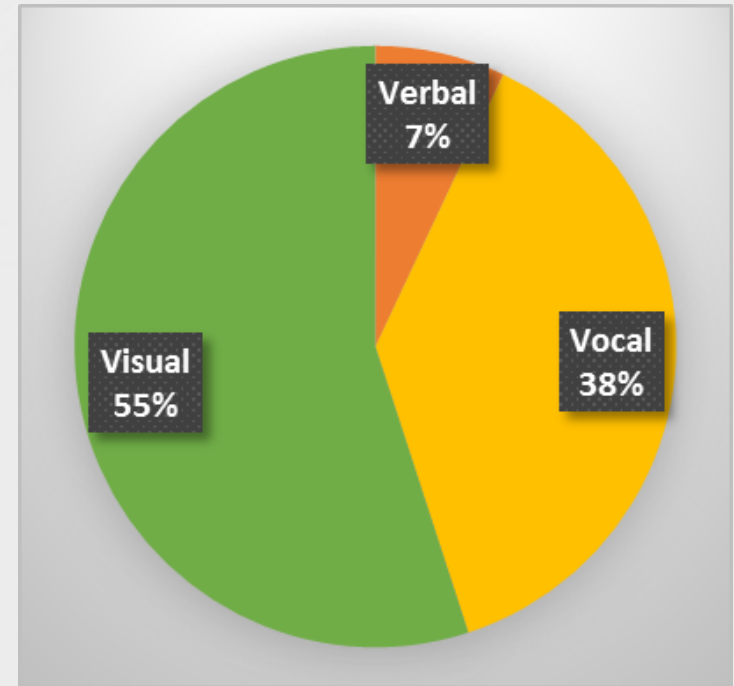
Communication

CONVEYING MEANING IN THE MIDST OF
CHALLENGES

Communication - Meaning

Communication of Message

- **Vocal** – Tone of Voice accounts for **38%** of meaning
- **Visual** – Body Language accounts for **55%** of communication
- **Vocal** – Words carry only **7%** of message



Useful Tips in Communicating

Communicating Clearly

- Face squarely
- Hold Hands
- Single thought
- Repeat several times

Communicating During Care

- Tell what are going to do/tell
- Say/Do what said were going to do
- Tell what Said/Did
- Listen and affirm



Communication Tips, Tools, and Techniques

Tips

- Humor and “Games”
- Ways to Dissipate Frustration
- Mindfulness
 - Breathing
 - Eco therapy
 - Simple therapeutic activities

Tools

- Visual Aids
- Rewards, reinforcement

Techniques

- Reframing
- Aikido Communication



Useful Communication Approaches

Use "I" Statements

- Own the Emotion, Action, Result
- Focus on self, what I can do and be

Drop **"You" Statements** – outright and hidden

- Are Blaming, Shaming, engender Guilt
- Are "Fightin' Words"

Pick up **Assertiveness**

Lay down **Aggressiveness**

Learn and Practice **Aikido Communication**



Aikido Communication



Elements of Aikido

- **Align** – find the other person’s perspective. Walk in the other person’s shoes.
- **Agree** – identify issue and concerns with an eye to finding common ground in terms of similar desired result, personal needs, and/or emotions
- **Redirect** – direct the conversation to those areas of agreement and commonality
- **Resolve** – seek to resolve differences by settling on:
 - Middle ground or a common concern
 - Resolution to agree to disagree

Communicate as Care for You

For You

- "I" statements
- Hidden "You" statements
- Assertiveness
- Reframing
- Addressing negative self talk
- Affirmations

As interact with others

- Asking/Asserting for assistance, i.e. building your team
- Give choices, in fact make a list
- Giving up control
- Keep in mind Intent vs. Impact
- Be gentle with yourself (and others)



5. Polling Question for Participants



What one insight, tip, or tool am I going to use in addressing difficulties in behavior and communication with my care receiver?

1. Stage Specific behavior such as listening, support, care strategies, or comfort.
2. Aikido, "I" Statements, or Assertiveness.
3. A communication tip to clarify and direct.
4. _____ (Fill in the blank)

6. Polling Question for Participants



How motivated am I to practice and use at least one insight, tip, or tool when addressing difficulties in behavior and communication with my care receiver?

1. Not motivated
2. Somewhat motivated
3. Fairly motivated
4. I'm going to change the world!

Resources



Books, Information, Worksheets, and Checklists

- Aikido Communication Sheet: Finding Common Ground
- Alzheimer's: The Long Goodbye, the emotional aspects of caregiving by Jeffery Morshead, 2012.
- Alzheimer's Association (www.alz.org)
 - Caregiver Stress Check and Caregiver's Checklist for Daily Care
 - Home Safety Checklist and Doctor's Appointment Checklist
 - 10 Warning Signs worksheet
 - 10 Steps to Approach Memory Concerns
 - Training Education Center: Courses with Class Handouts and Workbooks
 - Understanding and Responding to Dementia-related Behavior
 - Effective Communication Strategies
- Caregiver Connect: Caring for caregivers is focus of new JAA program by TOBY TABACHNICK, Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle, Feb 27, 2020
- Behavioral issues addressed in UCLA Caregiver videos and Family Caregiver Alliance video series
- Mild Cognitive Impairment – Nat'l Inst of Aging - <https://www.nia.nih.gov/>
- Wandering Information Sheet - UPMC

Questions from Participants



1. In Aikido communication approach, what do you do if the other person is just not following or aligning?
2. How effective is it for me to be mindfully breathing while my care receiver is screaming at me?
3. In the later stages of dementia when round the clock care is needed, how is it possible to find time for myself?
4. I seem to be the only trusted caregiver for my spouse, how do I get them to agree to another caregiver?

Hope Grows Contact Information

Hope Grows

info@hopegrows.net

www.hopegrows.net

412-369-4673

Mission: To inspire hope through nature while empowering caregivers to seek wellness of mind, body, & spirit.

Caregiver Q&A

What is Hope Grows?

Hope Grows is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that helps caregivers' alleviate stress and direct some of their focus on self-care. We offer counseling and support, therapeutic respite activities, and education and training. Most of our services are free.

How Do I Know I'm a Caregiver?

Hope Grows defines the caregiver as anyone providing unpaid care to dependent children, spouses, parents, siblings, relatives, friends, or neighbors.

Caregiving can include personal care, physical help, emotional or social support, behavior support, assistance with activities of daily living, assistance accessing services, and financial help.

How Do I Know If I'm Stressed?

Physical Strain - Lack of sleep or excessive sleep; back or stomach pain; headaches; use or increased use of stimulants or depressants (*caffeine, nicotine, alcohol or sedatives*).

Emotional Distress - anger, irritability, sorrow, or defensiveness; trouble remembering and concentrating; making poor decisions.

Spiritual Challenges - Feeling lonely; withdrawing from activities, hobbies, or faith/religion; saying "I can't do anything right"; feeling unhappy and removed from the world around us.

Social Withdrawal - Engaging less with friends or family.

We're here for you!

HopeGrows.net | 412.369.4673



OUR MISSION:

To inspire hope through nature while empowering caregivers to seek wellness of mind, body, and spirit.



We help caregivers plant seeds of hope

- 🌱 Weekly Caregiver Tips
- 🌱 Monthly Check-In Calls
- 🌱 Day of Rest & Relaxation
- 🌱 Short Breaks
- 🌱 Free Turkey Meals at Thanksgiving
- 🌱 Emotional & Mental Health Support
- 🌱 Caregiver Overnight Break Away
- 🌱 Healing & Restorative Gardens
- 🌱 The Iris Movement

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