

# FOUR FACTORS AND BASIC CONCEPTS FOR INTERVENTION

## Suggestions for Assisting Someone with Cognitive Impairment

Shelly Weaverdyck

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### BASIC CONCEPTS FOR INTERVENTION

1. **Respect** a person and who they are. Show them your love, respect, and admiration.
2. Remind yourself that we all have cognitive impairment in some way. None of us has a perfect brain.
3. Focus on how to rely on what a person does well, and accommodate what they have trouble doing.
4. **Change the way you act** and what you say, rather than trying to change a person or their behavior.
5. Listen for feelings and **respond to the feelings**, rather than simply to a person's behavior or words.
6. **Observe** a person closely to better understand how they are reacting or feeling and what kind of help they might want or need. Try to feel, see, and experience everything **from their perspective**. They will not experience a situation exactly as you do. They may even "see" an object in a different spot.
7. **Ask yourself why** a person is having difficulty doing something or is acting a certain way. **Address the reason**, trigger, or **cause** rather than simply the difficulty in functioning or behavior.
8. **Individualize** your interventions to a particular person at a particular moment in time. Remember needs and abilities will likely change over time and even from moment to moment. Assess frequently and have a variety of intervention strategies to try on the spot as a person and situation changes.
9. Be **creative**. Foster **autonomy**. Help them be in charge, and to do what they want when they want.
10. Help a person **relax** and feel comfortable so their brain can function more easily.
11. **Conserve their energy**. The simplest task for you is likely difficult for them. They are usually working very hard even on simple tasks. Make tasks, your interactions with them, and the environment as easy as possible for them, so they can save their energy for more enjoyable or more difficult tasks, such as eating ice cream with family, working a crossword puzzle, or taking a bath.
12. Avoid feeling offended or disappointed by what a person says or does. Acknowledge your own feelings of distress, then set them aside until later. For now, focus on the person and what they need.
13. Remind yourself a person with cognitive impairment often isn't able to control what they say and do. They may know how to do something, but can't do it, or they can't stop themselves in time from doing something even when they know they shouldn't do it. They may not fully understand or know their own abilities, especially when distressed. Avoid calling attention to their mistakes or behaviors, asking them why they are doing something, or how they would feel if someone did that to them.
14. **Remember the positive** aspects about a person and what you love about them.
15. **Address the conditions** around a person, rather than simply the person. Make the expectations or requirements and demands of the conditions around them accommodate their cognitive abilities and their physical and emotional needs and preferences. To address the conditions, analyze four factors:
  1. **Person** with cognitive impairment
  2. **Environment**
  3. **Caregiver interactions with the person**
  4. **Task and daily routines** including their timing, structure, and appeal.
16. **Intervene** by changing the environment, how you're interacting with the person, and the task or daily routines, so they can function more easily, and understand and respond more easily to other people and the environment. Most interventions work sometimes and not others. Even **small** interventions can have a major effect. Here are a few examples of interventions regarding the four factors.

# FOUR FACTORS

## FOR ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION

### Examples of Interventions:

#### 1. Person

- Get to know them as an individual.
- Find out what their likes and dislikes are and adapt to them.
- Enable them to be in charge and to make their own decisions. Avoid making decisions for them.
- Follow the daily routines they have always followed in the past.
- Do tasks (like getting dressed) the way they used to do them in the past.
- Accommodate their sensory changes.
- Figure out which cognitive functions they do well and which they have trouble performing.
- Rely on the cognitive functions they do well. Use and develop strengths and resources.
- Help them with and support the cognitive functions they have difficulty performing.
- Compensate discreetly for the cognitive functions they cannot do. Help them feel competent.
- Change your interventions when their physical or emotional needs and desires or cognitive abilities fluctuate and change over time. Preserve their ability to function independently.

#### 2. Environment

- Use cues, such as objects, signs or notes that are understandable to them or they emotionally respond to.
- Make sure the environment and you are telling them the same thing (for example, avoid telling them it is time for a shower when they are eating breakfast in the kitchen).
- Make the environment feel homey, normal, safe, comfortable, warm, stimulating, and inviting.
- Make objects in the environment easy to see, recognizable, and engaging. For example, the objects stimulate conversation or are things they would want to use.
- Reduce noise, clutter, and confusion in the environment.

#### 3. Caregiver Interactions

- Explain and repeat as often as is necessary what is going on and what you or others are doing.
- Speak clearly using fewer words.
- Get their attention and keep it when interacting with them.
- Slow down.
- Be calm, warm, friendly, and reassuring. Show affection.
- Position yourself in a spot where they can best see and relate to you.
- Use your body to communicate. Be alert to how you look, move, and gesture.
- Make sure your voice sounds warm, reassuring, and unhurried.
- Build and keep trust in your interactions. Be honest and accurate.
- Only give as much information as is helpful.
- Have only one person interact with them at a time.

#### 4. Task and Daily Routines

- Make the task easier for them.
- Make the task something they want to do.
- Help them do tasks when they are emotionally ready for them and are well rested.
- Match the timing and schedule of tasks to their preferences and past experience.
- Discern their goals for a task and try to help them meet them, even when they are at odds with your goals for the task. Try to get everyone's goals met with theirs the highest priority.