Dementia and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Applying the Knowledge to Dementia Caregiving and Caregiver Support

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Applying the Knowledge to Caregiving

- Keep in mind: Forgetfulness and memory impairment are a hallmark of dementia.
- Early deficit = inability to learn new information.
- Behavioral approaches that require an understanding of cause-and-effect or consequences are generally not useful because they require learning!
Applying the Knowledge to Caregiving

- Strategies that require “carry over” of information over an extended period of time may no longer be useful or effective

- Examples
  - Rewards and consequences, delayed gratification
  - Attempting to “teach a lesson” when correcting a behavior

- Let go of the expectation of learning or carrying over new rules
Applying the Knowledge to Caregiving

- Disorientation is common
- Increased confusion in familiar places
- As dementia progresses, adults become even more dependent on structure, familiarity, predictability, and routine
- A change in environment can be extremely confusing and emotionally upsetting
- Flexibility of the environment is crucial to optimizing the care of a person with Alzheimer's Disease or other forms of dementia
Applying the Knowledge to Caregiving

- Communication/language difficulties are common

- Decreased ability to express oneself (expressive aphasia) and to understand what is being said (receptive aphasia)

**What To Do**

- Avoid long verbal explanations

- Avoid attempts to verbally reason with an adult with DS and AD as this can be extremely unproductive
Applying the Knowledge to Caregiving

- Disorientation/confusion contributes to resistance to change and transition
- General difficulty in interpreting and adapting to the day-to-day flow
- Adults with DS crave routine and structure. This becomes more pronounced with dementia

**What To Do**

- Anticipate transition times
- Aim to provide the most calm, predictable, and reliable routine possible
- Adapt routines to fit individuals’ needs
CAREGIVER SUPPORT
Rule 1

To provide good care, you must practice good self-care
Rule 2

When in doubt, refer to Rule 1
Caregiver Support

- Know your limitations
- Ask for help. Create a support network
- Use resources available through Alzheimer’s Association, DDS, local senior service providers or community support agencies
- Consider involvement of hospice during the later stages of the disease
Additional Webinars on Aging with IDD

General Aging in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Understanding Age Related Changes
- The Role of Polypharmacy
- Identifying and Assessing Pain
- Behavior Related Changes and Aging in Adults with IDD
- Health Promotion and Aging in Adults with IDD
- Mobility and Aging in Adults with IDD
- Aging with Down Syndrome
- Aging and Cerebral Palsy

Dementia and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Introduction to Dementia and Aging with IDD
- Early Evaluation of Dementia and Alzheimer’s Disease
- Stages of Alzheimer’s Disease
- Applying the Knowledge to Dementia Caregiving and Caregiver Support
- Caregiving in Action: Case Studies and Practical Tips
Additional Aging with IDD Resources

Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

Center for Developmental Disabilities Evaluation & Research
http://shriver.umassmed.edu/cdder/aging_idd_education
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