

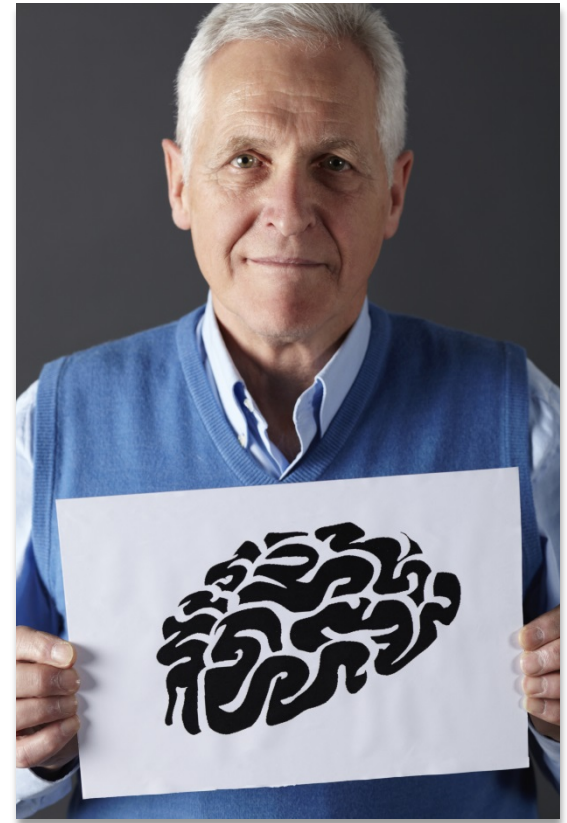
Understanding Dementia-Related Changes in Communication and Behavior

Objectives for this workshop

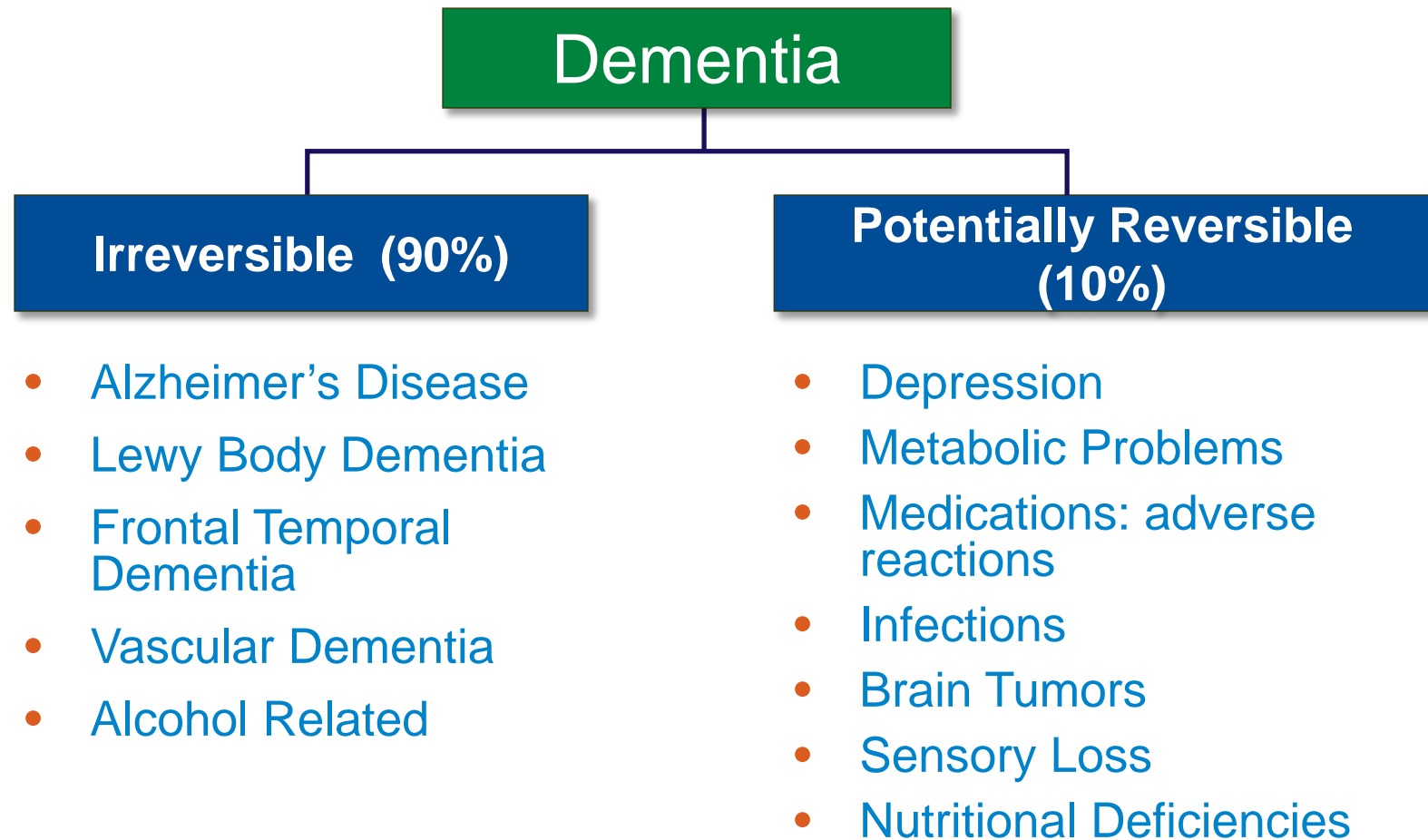
- ◆ To better understand Dementia (Alzheimer's disease)
- ◆ To learn the principles and practical techniques in communication
- ◆ To learn the principles and practical techniques in understanding and addressing challenging behaviors

What is Dementia?

- ◆ A syndrome that describes a cluster of symptoms which can be reversible or progressive
- ◆ Dementia itself is not a disease or a specific diagnosis
- ◆ Dementia is NOT a part of the normal aging process



Irreversible vs. Reversible Dementia

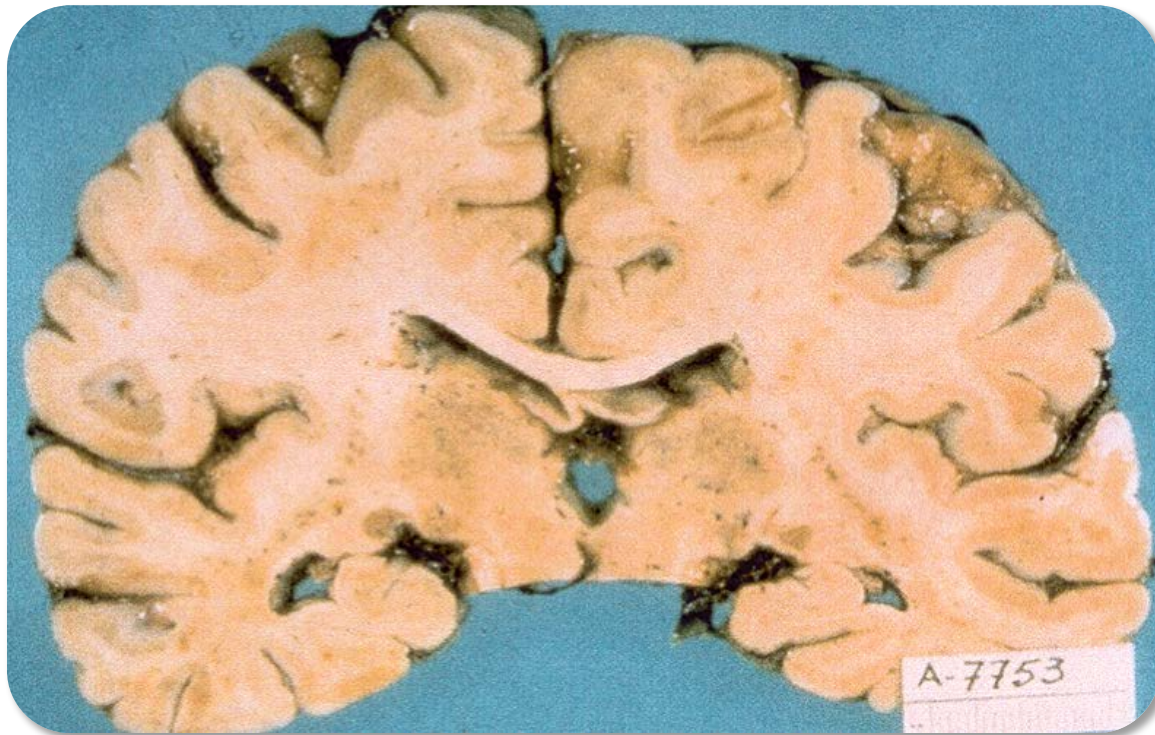


Alzheimer's Disease

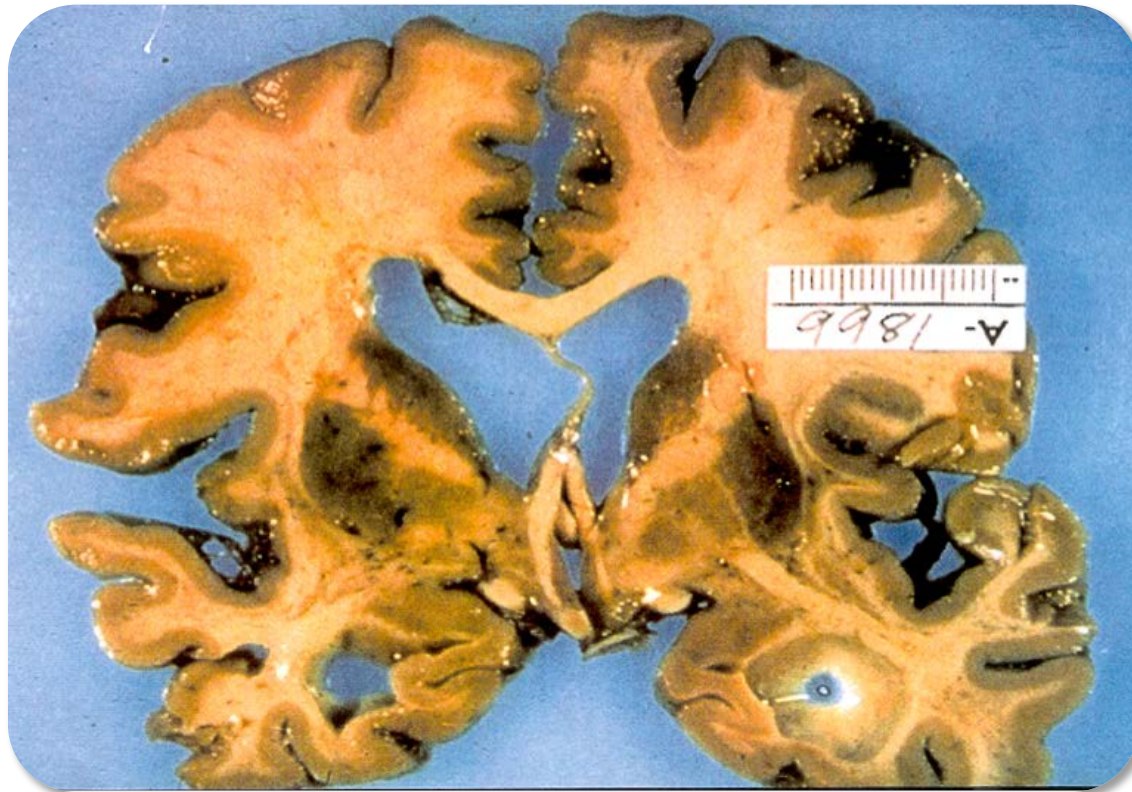
Most common type of Dementia (60 – 80%)

- Memory changes that disrupt daily life
- Challenges in planning or solving problems
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks
- Confusion with time or place
- Trouble with visual images and spatial relationships
- New problems with words in speaking or writing
- Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
- Decreased or poor judgment
- Withdrawal from work or social activities
- Changes in mood and personality

Normal Brain



Alzheimer's Brain



What changes?



- ◆ Memory
- ◆ Language/
Communication
- ◆ Executive
Functions
- ◆ Visual-Spatial
Perception
- ◆ Behavior

Communication Challenges

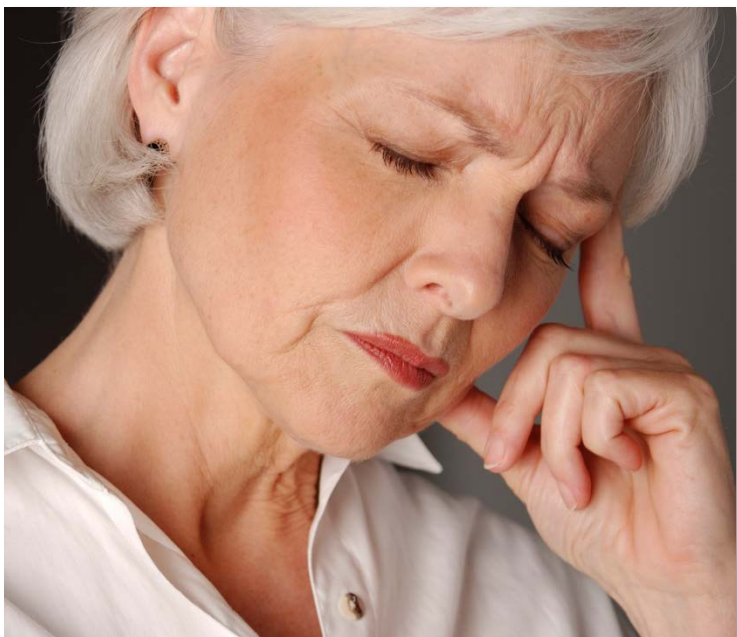


Communication: Beyond Words

Three major parts in human face to face communication

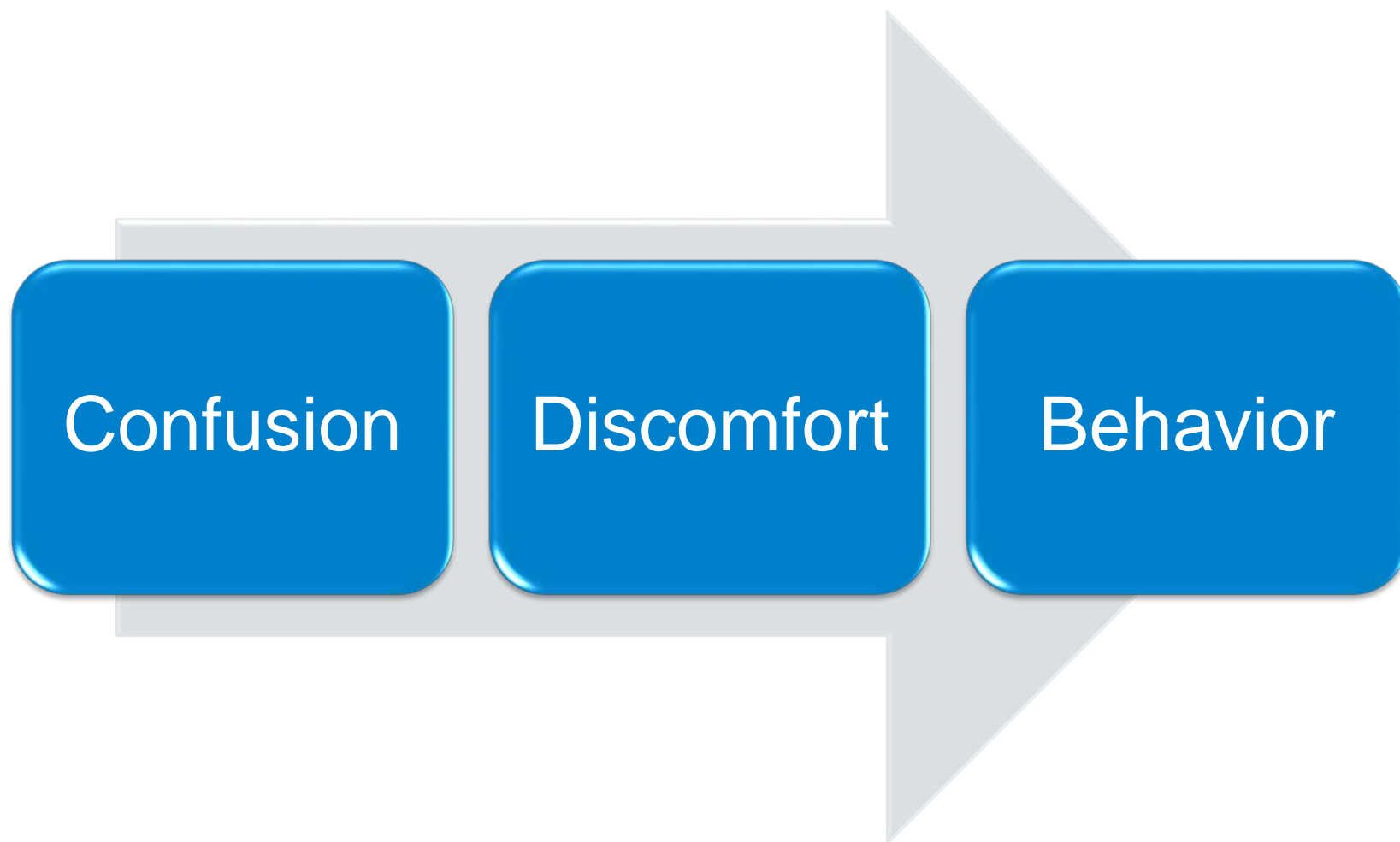
- ◆ 55% of impact is determined by body language - postures, gestures, eye contact
- ◆ 38% by the tone of voice
- ◆ 7% by the content or the words used in the communication process





What happens when
the parts of
communication start
breaking down?

Alzheimer's Disease: A Disease of Emotions



Principles for Communicating

- ◆ Understand what is and isn't possible to change; set realistic expectations
- ◆ Thoughts, beliefs and actions significantly impact behavior
- ◆ All behavior has meaning
- ◆ Connecting overrides the task
- ◆ Join in the reality of the person with dementia

Common Communication Challenges

- ◆ Word finding difficulties
- ◆ Making up words
- ◆ Can't speak in complete sentences
- ◆ Forgets English, if it is a second language
- ◆ May not understand what you are saying
- ◆ Inability to speak (but may understand)
- ◆ Problems reading and writing
- ◆ May not speak but can sing or recite prayers

Steps to Compassionate Communication



1. Be a Good Listener



- ◆ Express interest
- ◆ Don't interrupt
- ◆ Focus on feelings
- ◆ Be patient

2. Facilitate a Connection

- ◆ Establish eye contact
- ◆ Use touch and gestures
- ◆ Use a calm voice
- ◆ Speak simply and slowly



3. Check the Environment



- ◆ Be in plain view
- ◆ Avoid bright and dark settings
- ◆ Set aside a quiet place or time
- ◆ Reduce distractions



4. Adjust Your Approach

- ◆ Think ahead
- ◆ Give simple instructions
- ◆ Ask one question at a time
- ◆ Be mindful of facial expressions and body language

Effective Communication

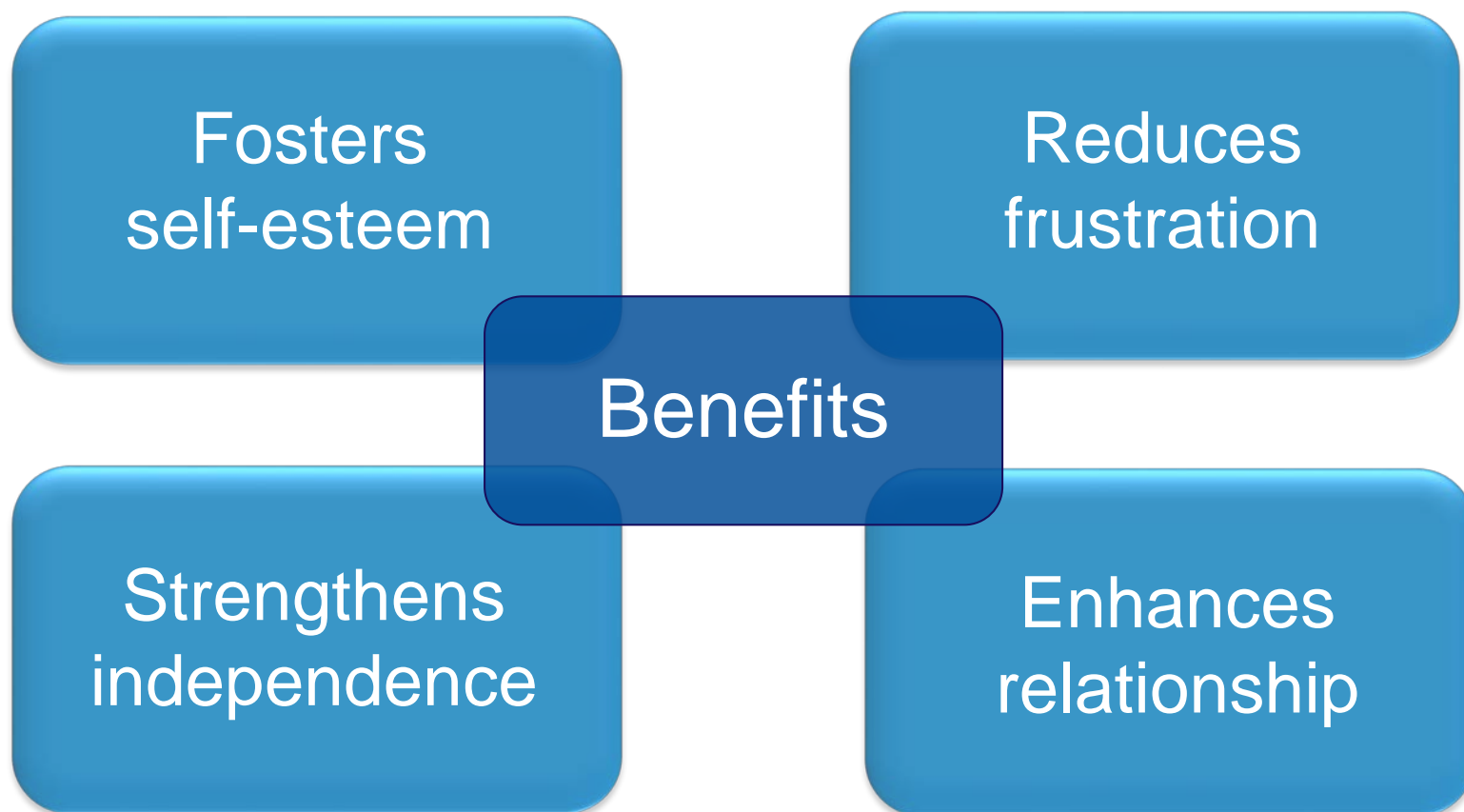
DO

- Repeat
- Accept blame
- Take a break if things aren't going well
- Agree
- Use distraction

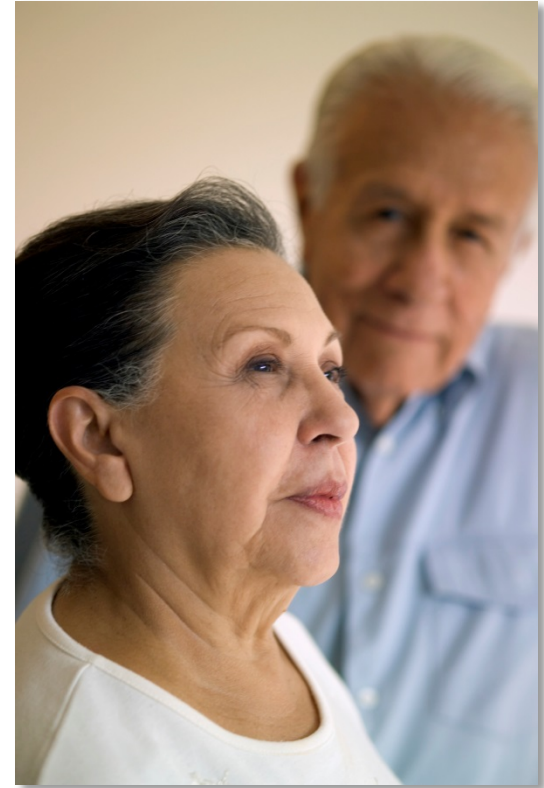
DON'T

- Reason
- Argue/confront
- Remind
- Question recent memory
- Take it personally

Benefits of Compassionate Communication



Understanding Difficult Behaviors



Common Behavior Challenges

Pacing,
wandering

Loss of
inhibition

Impulsiveness

Repetitive
questioning

Agitation,
aggression

Resistance

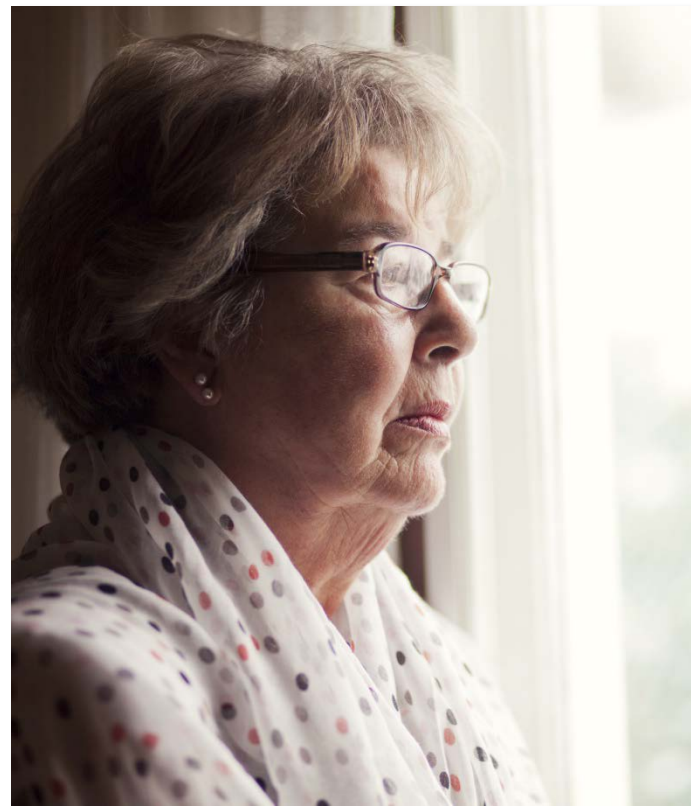
Why Do Behavioral Problems Occur ?

The breakdown of brain structures caused by the plaques, tangles and atrophy (neuronal death) result in:

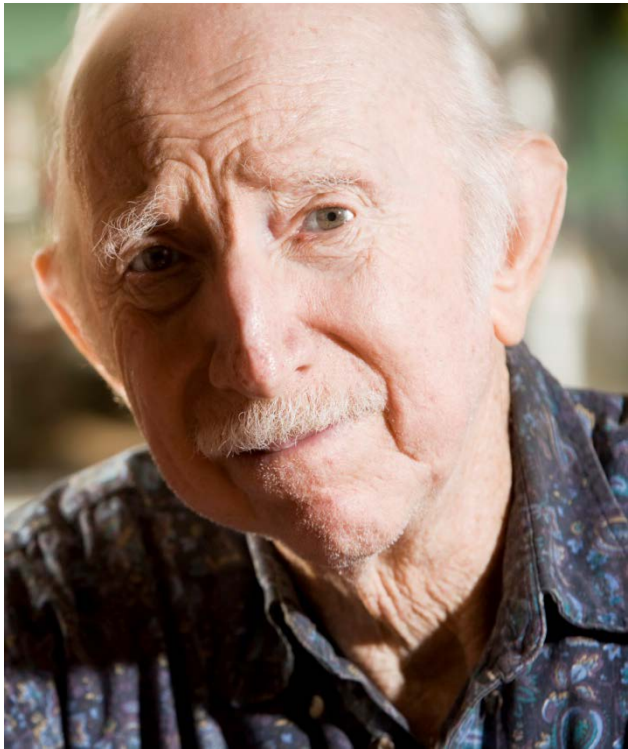
- Mood swings
- Loss of understanding & logic
- Perseveration
- Disinhibition
- Difficult & agitated behaviors

Why Do Behavioral Problems Occur ?

- ◆ Person with dementia experiences world differently
- ◆ Behaviors may not make sense to us but they make total sense in the experience and perception of client
- ◆ Important to enter their world in order to understand their experiences (empathy)



Why Do Behavioral Problems Occur ?



- ◆ Lack of short term memory, confusion, fear and other problems may cause agitation, anger and/or frustration
- ◆ Delusions or hallucinations that are very real to the individual
- ◆ A decreased ability to negotiate surroundings

Understanding Why Difficult Behavior Occurs

Investigate

- What exactly was the behavior? Is it harmful to the individual or others?
- Did something trigger the behavior?
- What happened immediately before and after the behavior?
- How did witnesses react?
- Try to identify the cause

Understanding Why Difficult Behavior Occurs

Investigate

Often, it's physical discomfort or something medical:

- ◆ were they thirsty / hungry?
- ◆ Do they have to go to the bathroom?
- ◆ Too hot or too cold?
- ◆ Not feeling well? In pain?
- ◆ UTI
- ◆ Overmedicated?
- ◆ Overwhelmed?

Understanding Why Difficult Behavior Occurs

Investigate

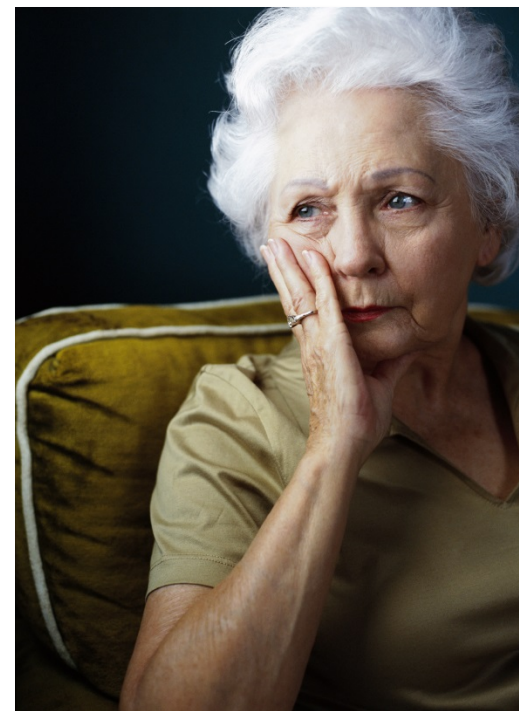
Sometimes it's environmental:

- ◆ Excess stimulation; i.e. too much activity or noise; too many people
- ◆ Loud or unidentifiable noises
- ◆ Too bright or too dark settings in hallway, rooms
- ◆ Mirrors or other reflecting surfaces, patterned wallpaper
- ◆ Too many changes in routine

Ask the Family Members Questions

Knowing about the person helps to

- ◆ Understand client's perceptions & experience
- ◆ Understand why he/she is behaving a certain way
- ◆ Manage the problematic behavior using client specific interventions



The Importance of Knowing the Person

- ◆ Preferred routines
- ◆ Habits
- ◆ Likes/dislikes
- ◆ Preferences
- ◆ Pet peeves
- ◆ What distracts client effectively?
- ◆ What causes client distress?
- ◆ What calms client?

Resources

In Orange County, CA :

Alzheimer's Orange County's

Helpline: 844-HELP-ALZ (844-435-7259)

www.alzoc.org

National Alzheimer's Association:

24/7 HELPLINE 800-272-3900

www.alz.org

