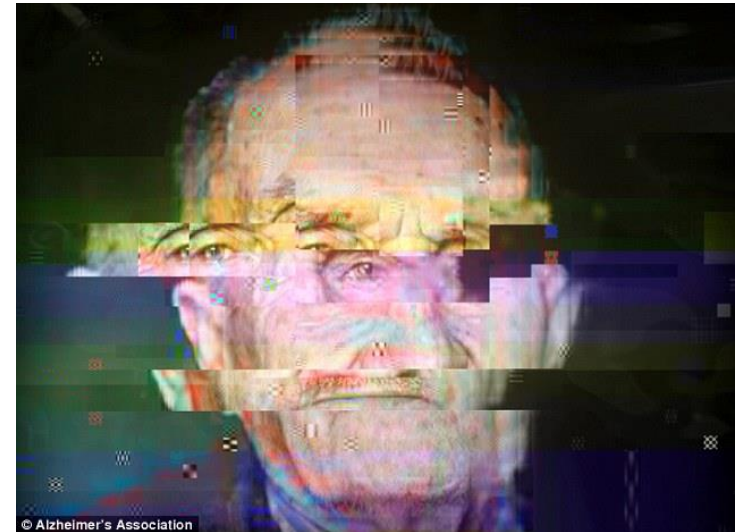


# Effectively supporting people with memory loss





# Objectives

- Why I am involved in supporting people with memory loss – specifically those with Dementia/Alzheimer's?
- What is Alzheimer's? What is Dementia?
- Alzheimer's signs
- How to effectively communicate with a person with memory loss
- Dementia/Alzheimer's care planning

# Why I am involved in Dementia/Alzheimer's awareness

- My mother died of Alzheimer's
- She was never diagnosed by a doctor; she was diagnosed by me following an awareness session
- I was totally ignorant about the disease and made many, many mistakes until I learned how to communicate and support her.

# What is Dementia? What is Alzheimer's?

- Dementia is the umbrella term; not a specific disease; all dementias are associated with a decline in memory **severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities**
- Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia and accounts for 60 – 80 percent of cases.

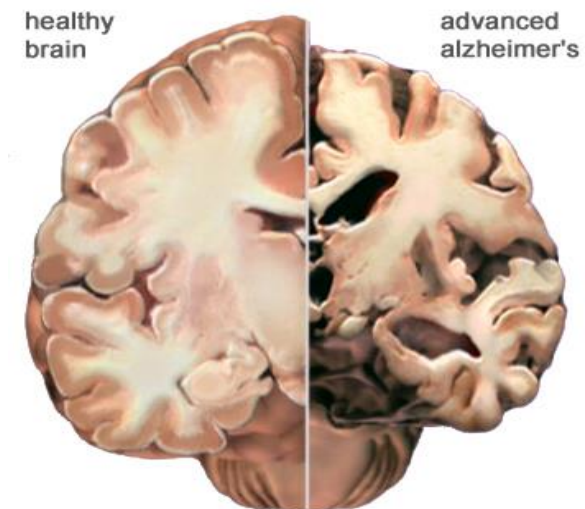
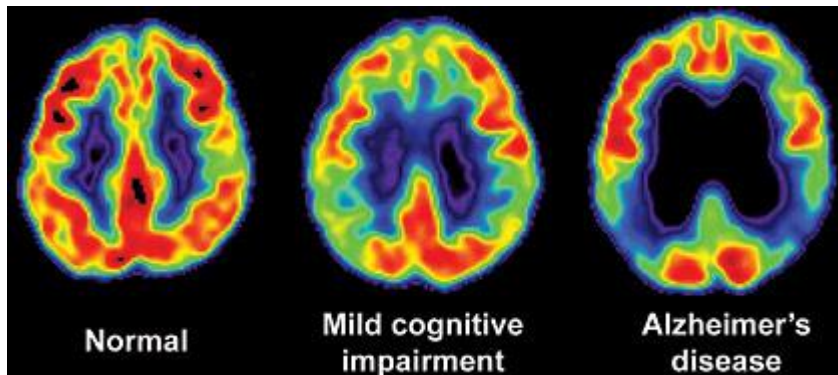


# Dementia umbrella



# What is Alzheimer's?

- Brain disease that causes steady decline in memory and intellectual functioning
- Alzheimer's worsens over time
- No current cure, but treatment for symptoms is available and research continues.
- Is fatal



# What is Normal Aging?

- **Sometimes forgetting names or appointments** but remembering them later
- **Making occasional errors** when balancing a checkbook
- **Needing occasional help** to use the settings on a microwave or to record a TV show
- **Confusion about the day of the week** but recalling it later
- **Sometimes having trouble finding the right word**
- **Misplacing things from time to time** and retracing steps to find them
- **Making a bad decision** once in a while

# 10 Early Signs and Symptoms

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Memory loss for recent and new information that **disrupts daily life**

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Challenges in **planning or solving problems**

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**Difficulty completing familiar tasks** – managing money, medications, driving, cooking

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**Confusion with time or place** – getting lost while walking or driving

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**Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships**, gauging distance

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# 10 Early Signs and Symptoms

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Problems with word finding, name recall, or writing

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**Misplacing things**, putting them in odd places and **losing the ability to retrace steps**

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**Worsening judgment** – not being able to think things through

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**Withdrawal from work or social activities**

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**Changes in mood, personality and behavior.**

# Communication Tips

- **Treat the person with dignity and respect.** Avoid talking past the person as if he or she isn't there.
- **Be aware of your feelings.** Your tone of voice will communicate your attitude. Use positive, friendly facial expressions.
- **Be patient and supportive.** Let the person know that you are listening and trying to understand. Show that you care and do not interrupt.
- **Offer comfort and reassurance.** If he or she is having trouble communicating, reassure them that it's okay and encourage the person to continue.

# Communication Tips

- **Avoid criticizing or correcting.** Listen and try to find the meaning of what is being said.
- **Avoid arguing.** If the person says something you don't agree with, let it be. Arguing makes things worse and often increases agitation for the person with dementia.
- **Offer a guess.** If the person uses the wrong word or cannot find a word, try guessing the right word.

# Remember...

The communication channels for a person with memory loss are broken

- Their vision becomes “**tunnel vision**”
- They hear **muffled voices**, miss hearing some of the words in a sentence and cannot process the information
- They will get **confused, agitated, frustrated**

## A few words on safety...

**Safety is vital as Dementia/Alzheimer's progresses, but caregivers do not need to go overboard financially.**

- No need for major home renovations
- No need for fancy technology

**Ensure:**

- Medication safety
- Driving safety (take car keys away at appropriate time}
- Door locks that prevent wandering out of the house or where there are stairs

# How to Start a Conversation

- **Stand in front of the person**, identify yourself, and keep good eye contact.  
If the person is seated or reclined, **go down to that level**.
- Call the person by their **preferred name** to get their attention.
- Use **short, simple** phrases; repeat information as needed; ask one question at a time.
- Speak **slowly and clearly**; use a gentle and **relaxed** tone.
- **Patiently wait** for a response while the person takes time to process what you said.

### Provide

- Provide statements rather than questions.  
"Here is the bathroom" vs. "Do you need to use the bathroom?"

### Avoid

- Avoid confusing and vague statements about what you want the person to do. Name an object or place. Say "Here is your hat."

### Turn

- Turn negatives into positives.  
Instead of saying, "Don't go there," say, "Let's go into the kitchen."

During the Conversation

# During the Conversation

## Give

- Give visual cues. Point or touch the item you want the person to use or begin the task for him or her.

## Avoid

- Avoid quizzing. Reminiscing may be healthy, but avoid asking, "Do you remember when?"

## Try

- Try using written notes or pictures as reminders if the person can understand them.



# Dementia Care Planning

1. **Early detection and diagnosis is critical** – from qualified neurologist
2. **Share appropriate information** - with doctors, family members, friends
3. **Know the person's likes and dislikes.**
  - Know what they really enjoy - music, chocolate ice cream, flowers?
  - Know what they hate or agitates - noisy places, showers, scratchy clothes?

# Dementia Care Planning

## 4. Maximize their independence

- If they are able, let them dress, set table, dry dishes, fold socks

## 5. Practice patience and compassion

- Remember, memory loss means part of the brain is dying

## 6. Personalize care

- Every dementia case and situation is different. “One size fits all” care does not work. Remember who the person was and treat them like you used to treat them.

# Handouts

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- Booklets and information available today at the Rotary Club. Please help yourself.
- The Chanhassen Senior Center and the Chanhassen Library will have Alzheimer's tables available throughout November (Alzheimer's Awareness Month) with free information
- If you have specific personal questions and don't wish to ask publicly, email me at [dorinatipton@gmail.com](mailto:dorinatipton@gmail.com)



# Acknowledgements

- 90% of the information in this presentation is from the Alzheimer's Association and from Dementia Friends training
- 10% of the information is from books, websites, or seminars I have attended over the years
- All photos and pictures were copied from internet images



Questions,  
comments

