

# Adult Day Self-Care Newsletter

April 2023

## Rainy Days

April often brings rainy days. These can be beautiful and, as the old song goes, the rain brings us flowers in May. But rainy days also can be a challenge, making it hard to get places and do some of the things we want to do. Life is like that—good days and bad. Work is like that, too. When work involves supporting people with memory loss and other complications, there are good days and bad. When a person's memory loss progresses, challenging behaviors can emerge that cause distress to others and leave everyone feeling like it was a bad day. Behaviors can be challenging because they cause consequences to others—safety risks, disruptions, and stress. Some behaviors become challenging because they intensify or persist—the voice gets louder, or the question is repeated for the 20<sup>th</sup> time. Family members, Adult Day Center staff, and other program participants can react to these behaviors in ways that are not helpful, making a bad day worse. While we can't prevent rainy days, and we can't always prevent challenging behaviors, there are ways to prepare and respond that can lessen the problem. In this issue, we include tips for Adult Day Center staff to manage challenging behaviors.

## Non-Pharmacological Interventions

Causes of challenging behaviors vary, including potential physical causes (pain or discomfort), environmental causes (loud noises, changes in routine), and social or emotional causes (reaction to others' distress, fear, frustration).

While medications can help some things (like a urinary tract infection, depression, hallucinations), and seems like an easy fix, a prescription is not always the best or safest option. If a program participant takes medication primarily for behavior control, be on the lookout for side effects. Report observations to the family.

There are many things to do that do not involve medication. These are called non-pharmacological interventions, and include creating a caring environment, providing professional development to program staff, and individualizing care. (see p. 2)

*Source:* Caspar, S. et al. (2018). Nonpharmacological management of behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia: What works, in what circumstances, and why? *Innovation in Aging*, 1(3), 1-10. doi:10.1093/geroni/igy001



## Circle of Harmony: A COPSA Resource

We offer training on *Circle of Harmony*, a strength-based approach for managing behavioral challenges exhibited by people with dementia. This approach helps professionals make the connection between a person's abilities and challenges, and their neuropsychological deficits and strengths.

An engaging [video](#) on this topic is posted on our website.

## Managing Challenging Behaviors

Consider approaches that modify the program environment, which includes building staff skills and using direct interventions designed to modify an individual's behavior.

**Creating a caring environment:** Adjust the space to keep reasonable levels of noise, light, and temperature. A homelike space can help, too, created by reducing the institutional feel of the space (overhead fluorescent lights). Daily activities, like meals, can be more "friendly" if served family style with staff sitting among participants, instead of delivering trays.

The social environment is as important as the physical environment. Social factors include communication, supportive relationships with participants and families, close and trusting care teams, and responsive leaders.

**Professional development:** While most programs that include dementia care provide some training at orientation, there is still a need for ongoing training and support to enhance staff skills. Relevant topics include understanding dementia, focusing on strengths, effective communication, and staff self-care.

**Individualizing care:** While meeting basic needs and ensuring safety must be a primary focus, it's also important to attend to the unique needs and preferences of participants. Careful and comprehensive assessments and ongoing skilled observation will identify needs based on stage of dementia and functional abilities. Also learn about the interests and preferences of each person. When possible, offer choices and adapt activities, such as involving participants in choosing music.

Combining these three approaches may reduce challenging behaviors and help staff and participants better handle behavior difficulties when they do occur.

## For More Information

Our [manual and videos](#) on *Foundations of Dementia Enabled Care in Adult Day Programming* include useful information for program staff. The manual also includes worksheets to help staff think through how to apply the manual content on the job.

## Care2Caregivers Website

You can find the [Adult Day Resources pages](#) on our website through the drop-down menu in the Professional Resources section.

Preventing stress and burnout will help staff better manage challenging behaviors. As always, you can access the Self-Care resources on our website for free. Use our NEW link:

**Self-Care for Professional Caregivers**  
<https://care2caregivers.com/professional-resources/self-care/>

### Upcoming Caregiver Education

Managing Your Emotions  
April 19, 2023 1:00 pm  
Click [HERE](#) to register

End of Life Conversations  
May 11, 2023 | 1:00pm  
Click [HERE](#) to register

The Long Goodbye: Understanding  
Caregiver Grief and Loss  
June 6, 2023 1:00 pm  
Click [HERE](#) to register

For more info email Mary Catherine:  
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or call Care2Caregivers at 890-424-2494



visit our website [www.care2caregivers.com](http://www.care2caregivers.com) for information on caregiver support groups

**1-800-424-2494**