

# Coping with Change: Strategies for Responsive Behaviours

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# Goals for today

- Introduce you to the notion of responsive behaviours
- Share tools and resources that will help to:
  - Identify and understand possible triggers or causes of responsive behaviours
  - Put strategies in place to manage response behaviours that will meet the individuals' needs



# Responsive Behaviours

- Otherwise known as challenging or disruptive behaviours
- Forms of behaviours include:
  - Verbally protective behaviours (both aggressive and non aggressive)
  - Physically protective behaviours (both non-aggressive and aggressive)

# Why the Behaviours?

Researchers and practitioners believe:

- Changes in brain due to illness – affects memory, judgment, orientation, mood, behaviour
- Physical or social environment – invasion of personal space, poor lighting, inability to negotiate their environment
- Unmet need person with dementia is experiencing but unable to express



# What does the Term Mean?

- Responsive behaviour – reflects a response to something negative, frustrating, or confusing in the person's environment.
- The term “responsive” behaviours places the reasons or triggers for behaviours *outside* of the individual rather than *within* the individual (caused by biological processes)
- Persons with dementia chose this term – a behaviour is a means of communication
- To address behaviours – need to change the environment (physical or social aspects)



# Persons with Dementia

- Dementia is a progressively deteriorating process
  - Whatever a person with dementia does, it is the best that he/she can do at that time and based on what they perceived as their reality
  - People with dementia cannot manipulate – they live in the “now” = cannot remember, plan, organize or act in a deliberate manner
  - Every person with dementia tries to make sense of their world – by constantly looking for cues/info from their environment (physical & people within) & drawing on their past life experiences
  - Brain connections change and become lost so they may not be able to do the same things as yesterday



# Dementia and Behaviour

Only after we understand  
the behaviour  
can we meaningfully  
manage the problem



# Understanding the Behaviour

1. What is happening? Understanding possible causes and triggers
2. Who is it affecting and who needs to be involved? [other family members, teachers, care provider]
3. Creating Strategies that work



# What are Possible Triggers/Causes?

**P**hysical (medical factor –illness such as UTI, Flu, Cold, Headache, pain, etc.)

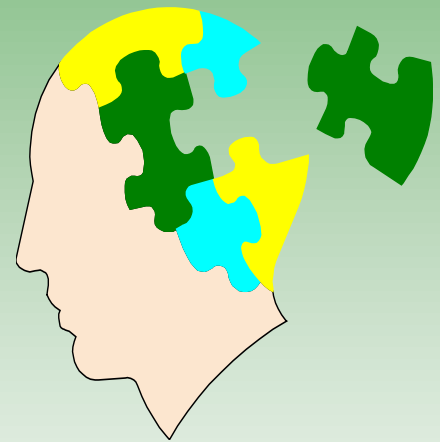
**I**ntellectual (Frustration with lack of ability to communicate?)

**E**mootional (Need for touch, love)

**C**apabilities (Difficult task? Task too easy? Feeling rushed?)

**E**nvironment (Lighting, Noise, Commotion)

**S**ocial and Cultural Factors



# Creating Strategies That Work

1. Identify the behaviour and causes/triggers- We need to ask *what, when, where, who* and why?
2. Consider the individual's specific needs, capabilities, and preference
3. Adapt the strategies to the individual person; strategies must be in response to the causes/triggers of the behaviour

# Strategies

- Pharmacological Interventions - using medication and drugs to control the behaviour; prescribed by doctors and administered by nurses. **Used as last resort!**
- Non-pharmacological or Therapeutic Interventions – includes various interventions
  - meaningful activity participation (e.g., photo albums, physical activity such a walk, activities that bring familiarity and enjoyment, etc)
  - social interaction (e.g., sitting and talking with a person including active listening to the persons needs or struggles)
  - environmental intervention (e.g., remove noise/distraction, change lighting or seating, etc)
  - **Everyone can play a part!**

# Prevention Strategies

- Knowing and understanding the causes and triggers
- Communication strategies
- Creating a supportive environment
- Knowing the levels of escalation
  - Level 1 – Baseline behaviour
  - Level 2 – anxious behaviour
  - Level 3 – verbally protective behaviour
  - Level 4 – physically protective behaviours



# Strategies to Manage Responsive Behaviours

- Providing your undivided attention
- Validate the emotions of the individual
- Unconditional positive regard
- Redirect the individual in meaningful way
- Sometimes doing nothing is a plan
- Creating your own 'bag of tricks' for that person and share with others



# How to Cope

- Put yourself in your child's shoes – what are they telling you?
- Think ahead and plan for situations
- Let others know so they will understand
- Offer reassurance by touching and holding
- Redirect them with calming activities
- Create a supportive network for yourself and take breaks when you need them

(from "Dementia in children, teenagers and young adults: A guide for parents, teachers and care professionals, US Edition 2009)



# References

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- Gentle Persuasive Approaches in Dementia Care: Responding to Persons with Challenging Behaviours© 2005. Continuing Gerontological Education Cooperative (CGEC)

# Thank You!

For more information about MAREP go to our website: **[www.marep.uwaterloo.ca](http://www.marep.uwaterloo.ca)**, or contact:

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