

# Strategies for Engaging in the Activities of Daily Life

Kendra Heatwole Shank, PhD, OTR/L

Department of Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science



## Objectives

- Examine the connection between ability to engage in ADLs and progression of dementia symptoms
- Identify communication, task adaptation, and environmental modification strategies to support functional routines in the home
- Discuss ways to integrate strategies into care-partner education and support

# Outline

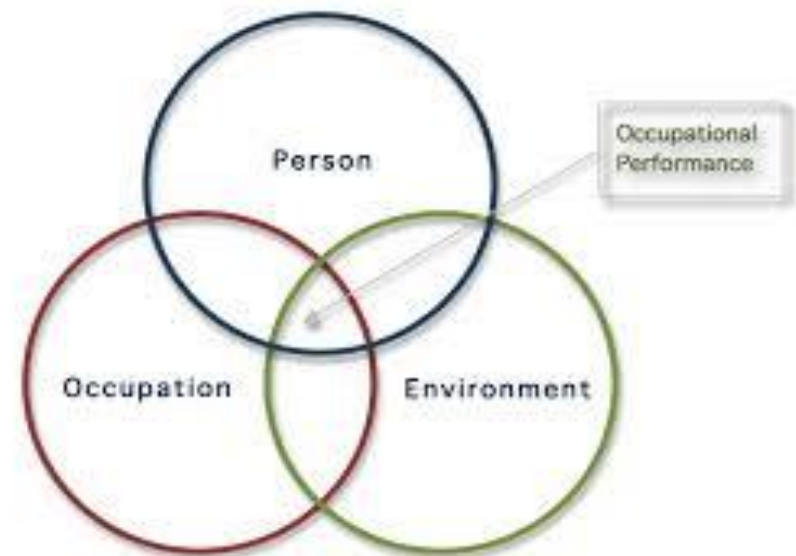
- Dementia and the Need to Do
- Guiding principles
- Strategies for engagement
- Care-partner Education
- Outcomes

## Dementia and the NEED to DO

- Innate drive to 'do' contributes to quality of life at every age
- Activity that engages the body and brain has positive affects on mood, sleep rhythms, strength, flexibility, and cognition; also linked with positive social networks and life satisfaction for older adults
- Individuals with dementia have declining functional ability, but the need to "do" remains high
- **Activities of Daily Living** = eating, dressing, bathing, toileting, mobility, + other meaningful tasks

## Guiding Principles

- ✓ Strengths-based approach to care
- ✓ Disease and stage-appropriate progression
- ✓ Do with, not for
- ✓ Choose the right target for creating change
- ✓ Participation is the goal



*Law et al., 1996*

# Strategies

1. Identify and maximize **Meaningful Occupation** (activity)
2. Implement **Environmental Modification** and contextual changes
3. Use **Communication that Connects** and supports
4. Practice **Hand-under-Hand Facilitation** of participation



## Strategy #1: Meaningful Occupation

- Meaningful roles & lifespan approach
  - Who is the person, what do they like to do, what activities are part of their identity?
- Activities that occur in natural environments at natural times
- Use 'procedural' memory
  - What do they know how to do?
- Sensory components
  - Sound, touch, smell
- "Parallel play" (do together, not for)

### Mrs. Merriman

- Watches TV
- Rarely leaves home
- Eats in recliner or bed
- Retired teacher
- Mother/wife

## Strategy #1: Meaningful Occupation

- Folding warm laundry (washcloths)
- Watering plants
- Drying dishes
- Rocking a doll/baby
- Separating nuts and bolts
- Taking a walk (indoor or outside)
- Kneading dough
- Brushing hair
- Singing or listening to music
- Sanding a block of wood
- Stirring, mixing, adding ingredients
- Pasting stamps in a book
- Dusting with a scented cloth
- Polishing silverware
- 'Playing' cards
- Prayer or spiritual practice



## Strategy #2: Environmental Modification

- Safety!
- Include visual cues about what to do and where to be
- Increase the ‘intuitiveness’ of spaces, remove extraneous or confusing items
- Design “no-fail” spaces

### Mrs. Merriman

- First floor/ half bath
- Dim lighting
- Clutter without purpose
- Attempted egress

## Strategy #2: Environmental Modification

Simplify → just the basics

Enhance → provide materials & experiences

Create → contexts that enable success

Modify → sensory and physical stimuli

Remove → triggers, barriers, temptations

EXAMPLES . . . .

## Strategy #3: Communication that Connects

- Use non-verbal communication to go along with your words
- Simplify your message ... and minimize questions!

DO:

- ✓ Narrate the present
- ✓ Notice
- ✓ "Tell me about it"

DON'T:

x Quiz, challenge, argue, or lie.

Mrs. Merriman

- Verbal irritability
- Resistance to care
- Positive relationship with daughter

## Strategy #4: Hand-under-hand Facilitation

- Procedural memory and neural pathways of the brain—hand are the oldest and strongest
- Hands: connection with others, attention, and regulation
- Hand-under-hand approach (Teepa Snow) <https://teepasnow.com/>
  - Manage behaviors
  - Complete personal care without resistance
  - Facilitate participation at a higher level

### Mrs. Merriman

- Requires assistance with dressing, bathing, grooming, toileting, meal prep

# Strategy #4: Hand-under-hand Facilitation

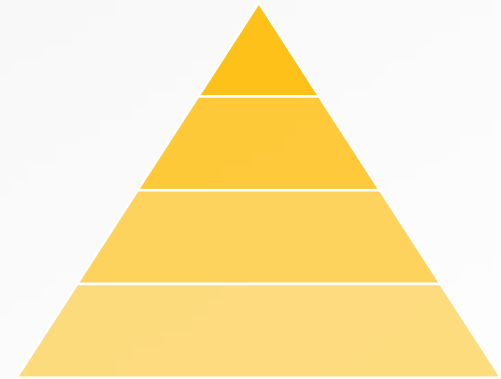
- Let's try it!



[https://4.bp.blogspot.com/-MKX9NvHZFOM/WFH1BFw1Tpl/AAAAAAAAABjI/rqMuFV\\_LBAMEFThtSpequeSxkyORXeS8gCLcB/s1600/HuH%2Bseated.jpg](https://4.bp.blogspot.com/-MKX9NvHZFOM/WFH1BFw1Tpl/AAAAAAAAABjI/rqMuFV_LBAMEFThtSpequeSxkyORXeS8gCLcB/s1600/HuH%2Bseated.jpg)

# Care-partner Education

- Different dyads need different tools!
- Something to do →  
    A safe place to do it →  
        Connection to others →  
            Participation and QoL
- Shift in thinking, shift in language, shift in problem-solving
- No permanent solutions



# Outcomes

Why focus on activities of daily living?

- Routines and meaningful activities structure the day, align with sleep/wake rhythms, stimulate, and engage brain and body
- Safety is enhanced when environmental triggers are reduced, and positive options and sensory input is increased
- Resistance to care can be minimized through appropriate communication and “doing with”

