

Exploring Dementia



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Dementia - what its really like!

Aims:

To explore types of symptoms people with dementia experience.

Objectives:

By the end of the session learners will be able to:

- ? Recognise some common symptoms of dementia.
- ? Understand some behaviours associated with dementia.
- ? Recognise how dementia may affect people's lives.
- ? Have an awareness of how dementia affects communication, perception and relationships.

Where do we get our
information about dementia?



Headlines

- ? *“Dementia is a living death for 850,000 Britains”*
- ? *“Dementia Time Bomb will hit 1.2 million”*
- ? *“Dementia robs victims of their identity”*
- ? *“Twice as many sufferers living in care homes”*

What do we know?



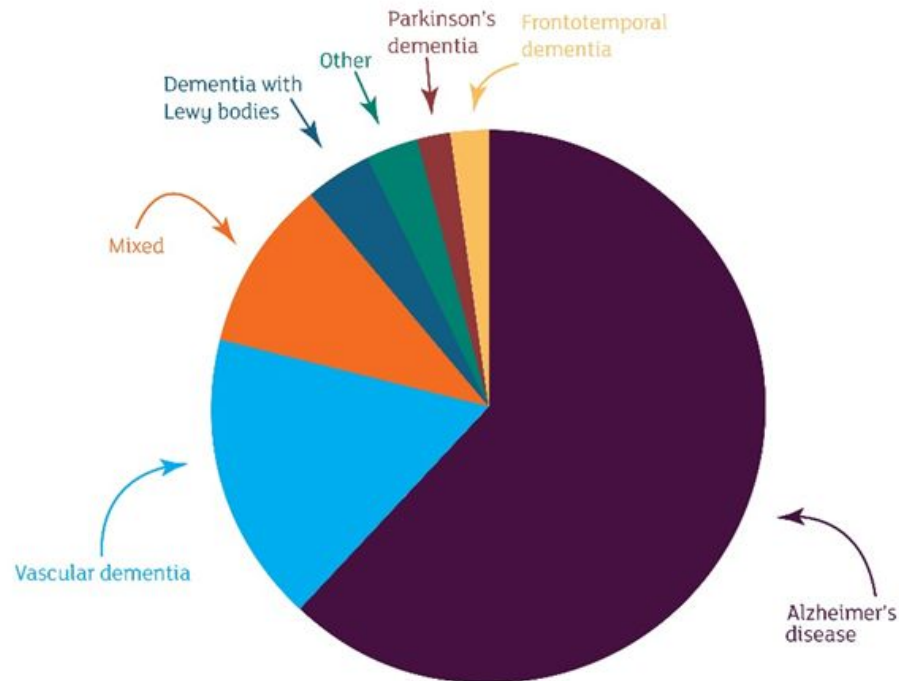
What is it Dementia?

Dementia is an umbrella term for a group of diseases that affect:

- ? **memory**
- ? **thinking**
- ? **orientation**
- ? **comprehension**
- ? **calculation**
- ? **learning capacity**
- ? **language**
- ? **judgment**



The Different Types of Dementia



Source; Alzheimers Research UK

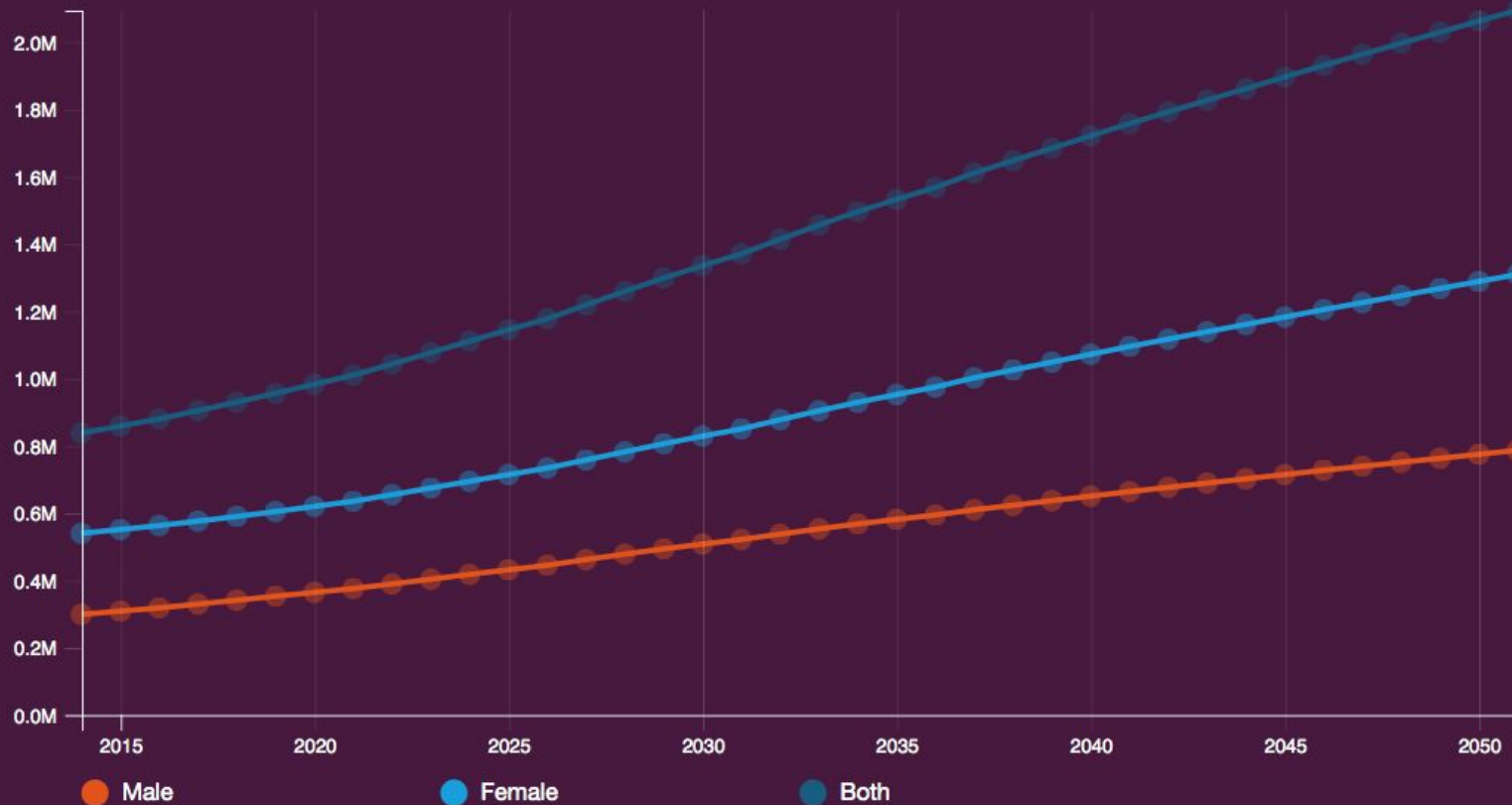
Key Facts

- ? There are estimated 850,000 people living with dementia in England today, a number forecast to rise as the population ages.
- ? 10 times more government funding is spent on cancer research than dementia.
- ? Only 44% of people with dementia in England, Wales and Northern Ireland receive a diagnosis
- ? 1 in 16 people over 65 have dementia
- ? 1 in 4 people over 85

24.6 million

people in the UK – **38% of the population** – know a family member or close friend living with dementia.

Numbers of people living with dementia



Glass half full or half empty?

- ? Dementia is progressive; there is no cure.
- ? Dementia is treatable.
- ? People can live well with dementia.
- ? No two people will experience dementia in the same way and the progression of dementia varies between people.

The Brain

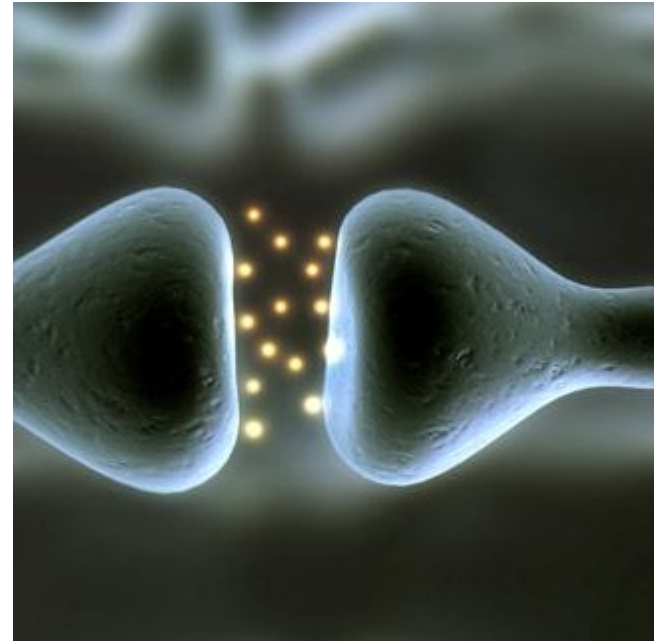
The brain controls every aspect of our behaviour, from the smallest movement to the most sophisticated thought.

The adult human brain weighs approximately 3lb and is made up of approximately 100 billion nerve cells.



Synapses

- ? Electrical signals that form memories and thoughts pass through each neuron making tiny leaps from one to another.
- ? Normally these cells signal to each other through small gaps (synapses) with the help of chemicals called 'neurotransmitters'.
- ? In dementia the chemicals can be effected as well as the function of the neurones.





Effect on the brain

In time, the effect of dementia is 'shrinkage' or 'atrophy', as brain cells die.

*Dementia is not a normal part of aging.
It is different from the mild forgetfulness that can occur in the elderly.*



Exploring Dementia

Some key symptoms

Memory

We know a lot less than we thought we knew. A current, very exciting area of research is proving that memory is far more complex than we first thought.

We do know that memory is rapidly and unevenly devastated in dementia.

? **Apple, table, penny, ball, key**

Memory; Registration

- ? The ability to hold information in the mind briefly. If someone is unable to register the information, they will not be able to hold it for even a minute.
- ? If you give a person an explanation of what you are doing, they will not remember it.
- ? *Eg. Helping someone to undress; they will have forgotten why you are undoing their buttons by the time you get to the next button.*
- ? An activity that requires explanation will not work for someone with registration difficulties.

Short Term Memory

- ? A memory for events that happened not long ago.
- ? Most people lose the ability to register information or hold it in short-term memory fairly early in their illness.

Long Term Memory

- ? Memory of things that happened weeks or years ago.
- ? Long term memory may be better preserved but is often selective and may have flaws.
- ? It is one of the greatest resources for sustaining identity and for conversation topics.

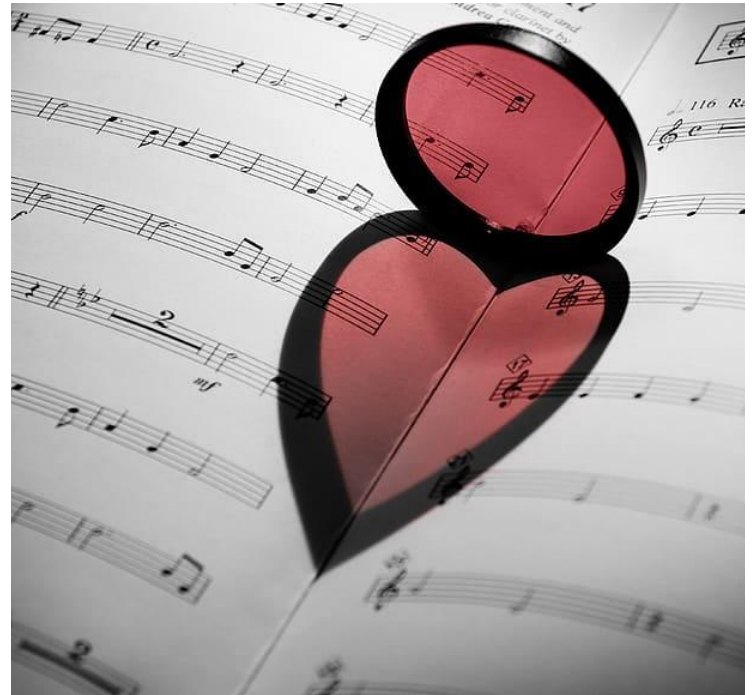


Emotional Memory

Evoked through the senses

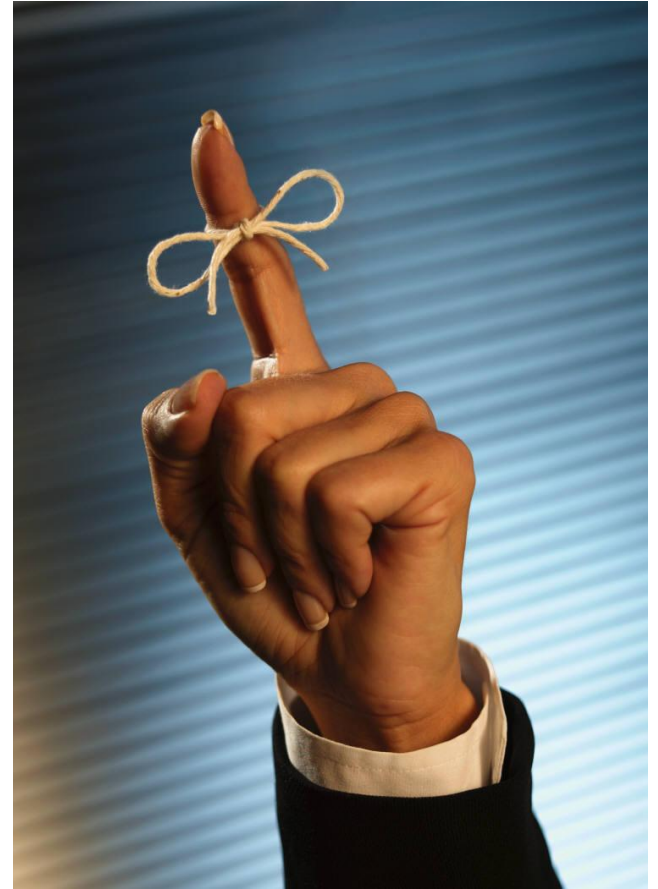
- ? A song
- ? A smell
- ? A sound

That creates an emotional response long before thinking comes in to it.



Memory; Recall

- ? Is the ability to remember something that happened or something the person was told a few minutes ago.
- ? The person may remember some things but not others.
- ? What a person remembers can be unpredictable.



Memory Exercise



Answers

? Apple, table, Penny, ball, Key



Distractibility

- ? We routinely ignore noises, people or multiple objects.
- ? Distractibility is the inability to focus on one thing and not others. If a person can not focus their attention, they won't be able to register what you tell them.



Impulse control

- ? Impulse control is the ability to control, divert or postpone the expression of feelings such as anger, frustration, fear and anxiety.

Can you think of an example of using your impulse control?



Postponing

We postpone all the time.

"I need the loo but I will wait until an appropriate gap in the proceedings to excuse myself."

Someone who has lost the ability to postpone will not be able to wait for their needs to be met. Telling them "in a minute" is likely to cause stress.



Disorientation

- ? Disorientation is failure to know where one is, who one is, and/ or date and time of day.



Disorientation

- ? People may behave as though they are in private when they are in public (disrobing).
- ? May mistake daughters for wives.
- ? May greet strangers as friends

It is for you to determine whether orientation is appropriate. In short, will orientation reduce stress?

Apraxia

- ? Difficulty carrying out motor functions.
- ? The brain stops telling the muscles what to do.
- ? Fine motor skills usually go first (in alzheimers) doing up buttons, handwriting.
- ? Activities of daily living become affected like using utensils. People find it easier to have finger food at this stage.
- ? Later the person may shuffle and have difficulty stepping over ledges.
- ? Late in the illness, the ability to walk, sit down and maintain balance are all compromised.

Apraxia

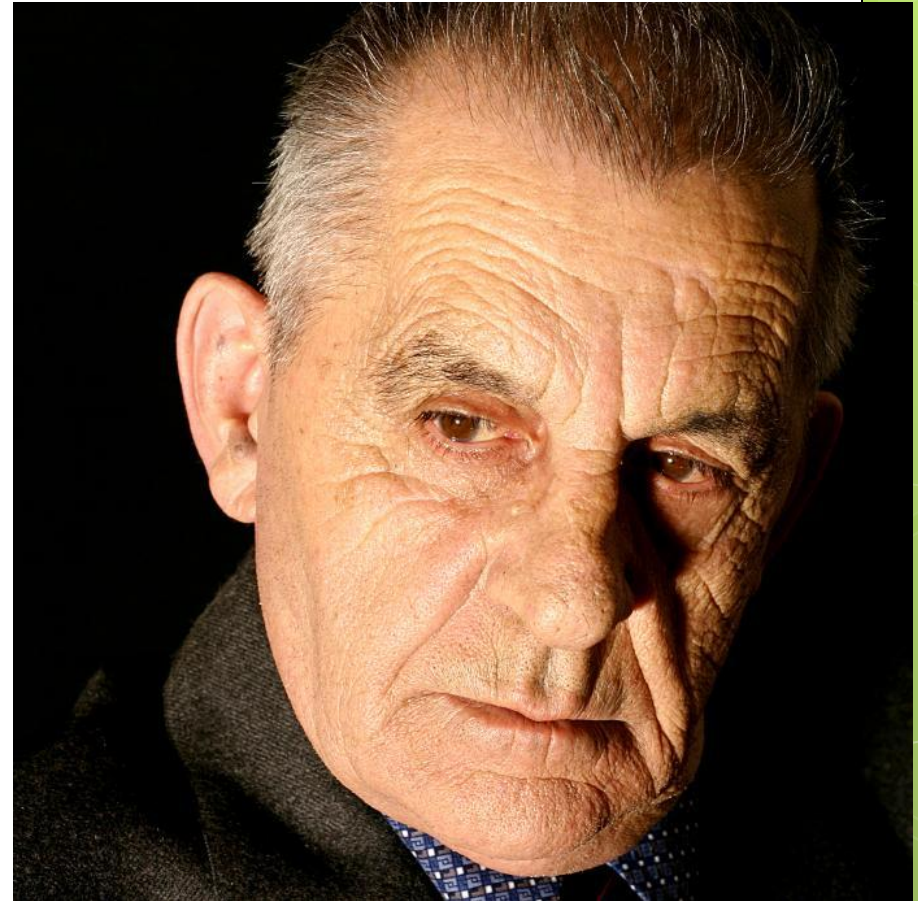
- ? Overlearned motor skills such as dancing and playing the piano may be retained for a surprisingly long time.
- ? Rocking a baby is often maintained until late in the illness.



Agnosia

The failure to recognise a familiar object.

A common and devastating agnosia is the failure to recognise familiar faces (prosopagnosia).



What is it?



Used by kind permission of David Clegg (The Trebus Project)

Insight

- ? The ability of the brain to monitor what one is doing.
- ? Your insight is telling you right now that you have your clothes on, that you are acting appropriately, that your hands are not in someone else's lap.
- ? Without insight, you would not know whether you were acting the right way - but you also would not know that you did not know
- ? Discuss: Are there advantages to loss of insight?

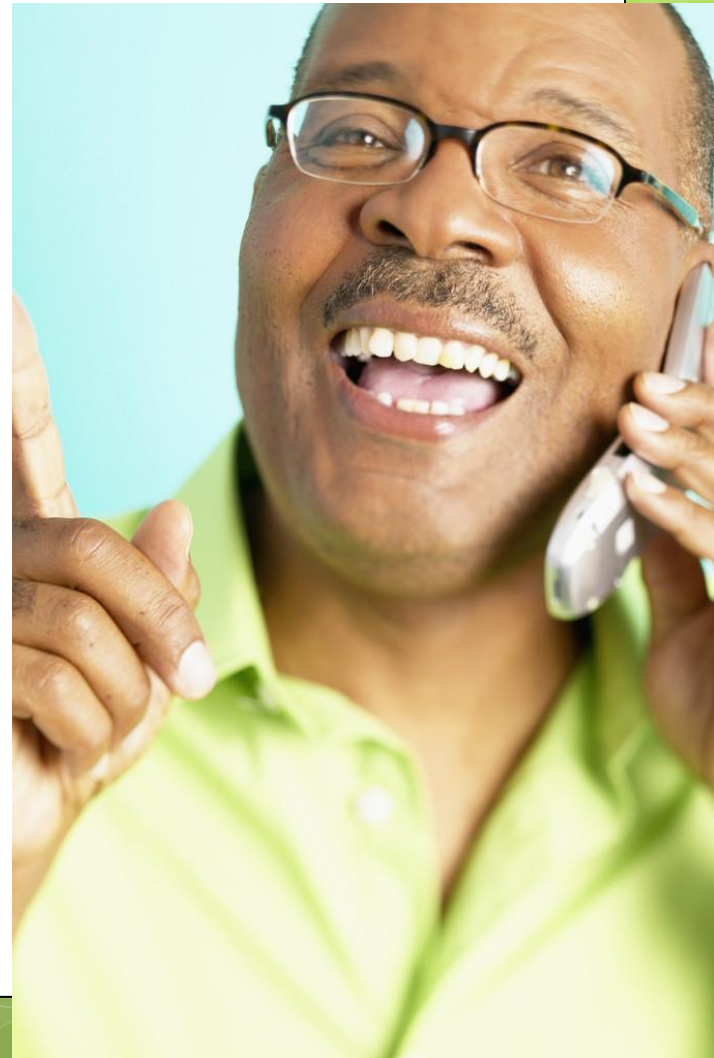
Aphasia

- ? The loss of ability to express or understand language or problems in communication.



Expressive Language

- ? The ability to speak and be understood.
- ? It is lost gradually; word finding difficulties may occur early on, while later the person may ramble and not be understood.



Receptive Language

- ? The ability to understand others.
- ? It may not be lost in parallel with spoken language.
- ? It can come and go.
- ? Imagine trying to listen with white noise being periodically switched on and off.



Compensation

- ? People often maintain the capacity to compensate or conceal their disability. This strength should be encouraged (it often exasperates carers).

Example:

A woman who has stress incontinence but has lost the ability to organise washing her knickers. She hides them in the bottom of the wardrobe and denies her incontinence. Instead of confronting her mother, the daughter discreetly washes them for her.

Compensation

- ? The ability to compensate is often lost alongside the failure to know there is a need to compensate (insight).
- ? People with this problem will not compensate for sensory deficits.

eg.

- ? They will not tell you they can't hear you.
- ? Not switch on a light if they can not see.
- ? Will take hearing aids off because they are uncomfortable.
- ? Will not walk carefully if unsteady.

Perseveration

- ? The tendency to 'get stuck' doing the same activity or motion over and over.
- ? Someone carrying out a painting activity may not be able to stop going over the same line again and again.
- ? Being unable to let go of an object can also be perseveration.

If it is not dangerous and is not causing stress, allow it to continue.



Choosing

- ? Being faced with choice can be very stressful for someone with difficulty in this area.
- ? We can reduce choice to maintain independence without taking it away entirely.



Judgement

- ? The ability to make critical distinctions and to arrive at sensible? decisions.
- ? Judgement may vary from day to day.
- ? Helping with judgement must be done on an individual and problem by problem basis.
- ? We have the mental capacity act to help with this.



Planning & Sequencing

- ? Planning is a complex skill that enables a person to carry out tasks of more than one step. Sequencing is doing things in the correct order
- ? We can help people with sequencing by making the items needed available at the right time. This helps maintain a higher level of independence.



Wayfinding

- ? We all hold mental maps of areas.
- ? People may retain some mental maps but lose others. *Eg. a person may be able to find the loo in their own home but not be able to find it in another environment*
- ? People with wayfinding problems will often avoid going out alone.
- ? Wayfinding difficulties occur very early on in Alzheimers and can be an early indicator.



Communicating



Hear and respond to the other person's reality:



It is kinder and more respectful to understand and respond to whatever reality the other expresses.

It reduces anxiety and aggression.

? Be honest...



Honesty doesn't
mean correcting
people.
Honesty means
being yourself.



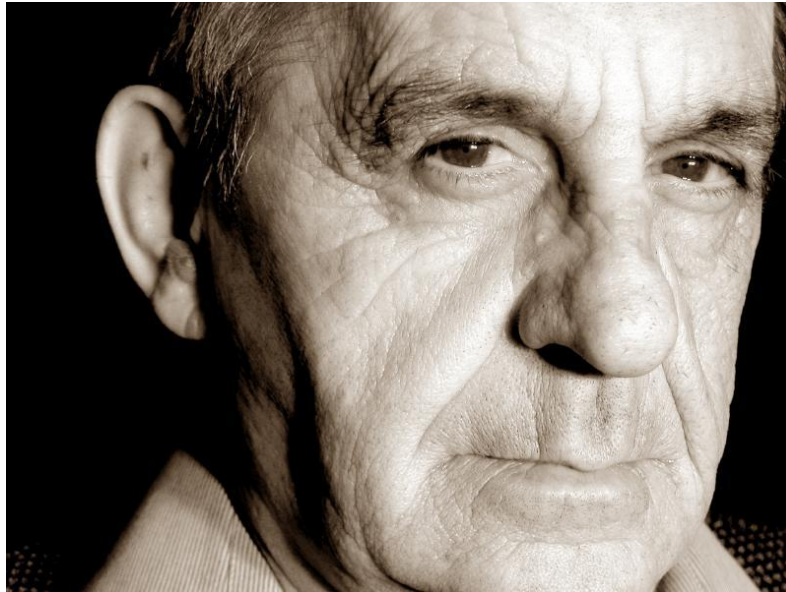
John is crying because he feels abandoned.

You know that he is being looked after compassionately. He may not remember that you have been with him recently.

How will you respond?

Address the person directly.

No one likes hearing people talking about them as if they were not there.



Talk directly to the person living with dementia.



Don't test..

Testing people does nothing but put people on edge, feel worried, embarrassed, inadequate and often scared.

Give all the information the person needs to feel comfortable;

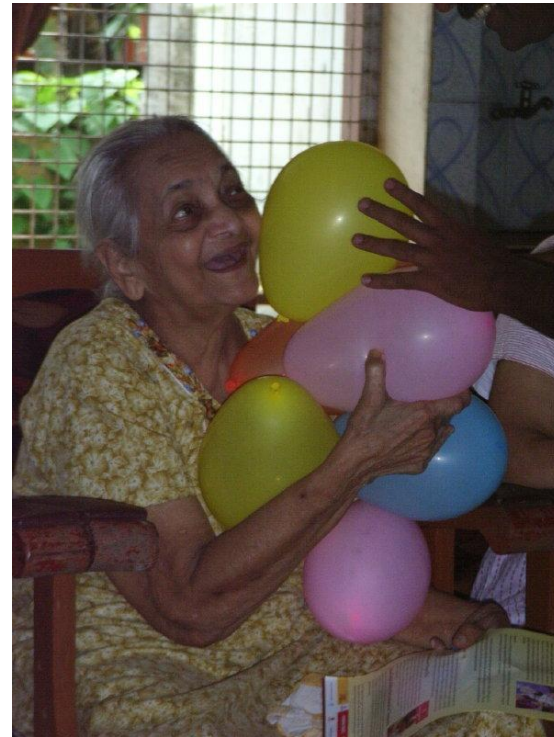
“Hello Mum, this is your grandson David who you always enjoy singing with.”

Avoid saying “don’t”,
Divert and redirect
instead.



Person-Centred Dementia Care Is Simple

- ? We all live in our own reality.
- ? By joining someone in theirs, we can really make a difference.
- ? Feelings become more important and thinking less as dementia progresses.
- ? We all thrive on human connections; let's make them matter.





Any questions?

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