

KEN'S STORY

FACILITATOR GUIDE



Understanding aggression & agitation and accumulated stress

RUNNING THIS SESSION

i Key information

This session:

- Demonstrates how stressors can build up for a person during the day leading to anxiety and changes in behaviour, and explores practical ways to promote engagement and prevent stress
- Consists of 2 short videos and 2 brief activities
- Takes approximately 15 minutes

You will need an internet-connected computer with a screen viewable by all in the group (e.g. projector for a larger group); pens and paper for participant use and optional whiteboard or butcher's paper.

Introduction

i Introduce the session and explain what will be covered.

In this session we will explore the role of accumulated stress in people living with dementia to help us understand what is happening for Ken, an aged care resident who becomes agitated and aggressive. We will identify strategies that aim to prevent a person from becoming distressed, agitated and aggressive.

There are two videos and two group activities for us to work through together.

Video 1: Ken's day – Take 1

Let's watch the first video. We'll learn a little about how people living with dementia have a reduced ability to deal with stress and how this can lead to anxiety and distress – and eventually agitation and aggression. As you watch, pay attention to what is going on for Ken.

i Play **Video 1** (3 min)

Activity 1 Identify Ken's unmet needs or stressors

- i** Ask participants to take a few minutes to identify Ken's unmet needs or stressors that he has experienced over the course of the day (as one group or divide into smaller groups). Refer to prompts if needed and ensure key stressors are considered.

Guiding prompts

- Think about what was happening for Ken in each scene / part of the day
How would he have felt?
- How did the different staff members communicate with Ken?

Some key stressors to note if participants missed them:

- Changed routine (sits in a different place/ late for breakfast)
- Boredom
- No attempt to engage him in an activity he is interested in or find out what he would enjoy doing
- Noisy environment
- Lack of engagement with him
- Food preferences ignored
- Worried about which shoes he's wearing – painful foot?
- Hungry/thirsty? Missed most of lunch and perhaps afternoon tea
- Lonely
- Anxious and confused about who is going away on holiday
- Anxious and confused about when his wife, Joyce, is coming back
- Staff contradict/argue with him
- (He may be tired / not had adequate sleep)

- i** Wrap up responses and highlight 1 or 2 things you want to draw attention to.

Video 2: Ken's day – Take 2

In this next video we see how Ken's day *could* have been if there were a greater effort to understand and meet his needs and therefore minimise stress building-up over the day.

- i** Play **Video 2** (3 min)

Activity 2 Identifying the differences

i Ask participants to identify what was done differently in the second video that reduced Ken's stress and relieved his anxiety. Refer to guiding prompts if needed and ensure key differences are noted.

Guiding prompts

- What did the staff do differently in this video?
How did this affect Ken?
- What was different about the interactions between staff and Ken?
How might this have made Ken feel?
- What impact would this different approach have on the staff?

Some key differences to note if participants missed them:

- Care worker listens to Ken when she collects him to go to breakfast
She tries to understand what he is looking for and concerned about and follows up on it later in the day.
- Greater attempt to communicate and engage with Ken – staff listen and observe and respond to him
- He's asked what he likes – food/activities
- Ken sits in his usual place at breakfast – familiar routine
- The lifestyle coordinator finds something that interests Ken –activity meaningful to him
- Care worker investigates /follows clues to see if something is wrong with Ken's foot – observes and acts
- Food server notices Ken's response to his meal and finds an alternative – observes and acts / personal preferences respected
- Care worker discovers Ken has a painful foot – and reports it to the nurse.
Ken's foot is treated, his pain is monitored and treated, he wears his sandals, which won't rub against the sore area.

i Wrap up responses and highlight that these differences are really about taking a person-centred approach.

Conclusion

Take home messages

- Recognise that people living with dementia may have a lowered limit or threshold for stress and that as a person's dementia becomes more severe the amount of stress they can manage decreases.

- As stress builds up for a person over the day, they can become more anxious and develop changed behaviour when they reach and go past their limit for stress.
- Stressors can come from many sources, such as: the environment (e.g. noise), pain and other internal stressors (e.g. hunger, fatigue, constipation), boredom/ lack of stimulation, loneliness, change in routine, family concerns.
- Minimise stressors throughout the day: engage with the person, know who they are and what they like, engage them in activities they can do and like doing, consider their environment. In other words, take a person-centred approach.

FOLLOW-UP

i Reinforce learning in a week or two by having the same group of staff reflect on this session. For example, ask if they have made any changes in their daily practice that has helped reduce stress for people in their care. Encourage staff to share their experiences and outcomes.

References

The stress theory that underpins this resource is based on the Progressively Lowered Stress Threshold Model (PLST).

1. Smith, M., Hall, GR., Gerdner, L., & Buckwalter KC. (2006) Application of the Progressively Lowered Stress Threshold Model across the Continuum of care. *Nurs Clin North Am*; 41:57-81
2. Smith, M., Gerdner LA., Hall, GR. & Buckwalter KC. (2004) History, Development, and Future of the Progressively Lowered Stress Threshold: A Conceptual Model for Dementia Care. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society. Volume 52, Issue 10, pages 1755–1760*
3. Hall, GR. & Buckwalter KC. (1987) Progressively lowered stress threshold: a conceptual model for care of adults with Alzheimer's disease. *Arch Psychiatr Nurs. Dec;1(6):399-406.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Resource	How to access
Responsive Behaviour Quick Reference Cards and Lanyard checklist cards	Available to download from DTA website https://dta.com.au/resources/responsive-behaviours-quick-reference-cards/
Responsive Behaviours app	https://dta.com.au/resources/responsive-behaviours-app/
Learn more about changed behaviours by completing a DTA online course, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding Responsive Behaviours 	Access a free course at: https://dta.com.au/online-dementia-courses/