

N.C. Nurse Aide I Curriculum

MODULE R Cognitive Changes Due to Aging

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1

Objectives

- Identify cognitive changes that occur due to aging.
- Describe the importance of pacing and patience while delivering care to the older adult.

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2

Cognition

The manner in which messages from the



are changed, stored
in memory,



recovered from memory, and later used to answer questions, respond to requests, and perform tasks

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3

Cognitive Changes due to Aging

IMPORTANT FOR AN OLDER PERSON TO USE THE BRAIN OR LOSE IT



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4

- Healthy older adults – no notable ↓ in cognitive ability and are able to learn
- Cognitive function is related to use
- Ability to think or problem-solve remains sharp

Cognitive Changes due to Aging – Key Terms

Learning – *gaining of information, skills and knowledge measured by an improvement in response*



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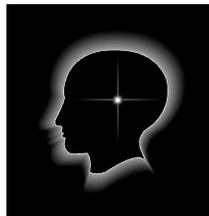
5

- The ability to learn remains
- Older adults learn things easier and better when they can set own pace
- Depends on memory

“Now, what is the definition of memory?”

Cognitive Changes due to Aging

- Size of neurons (brain cells) progressively ↓
- Total brain mass ↓



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6

Cognitive Changes due to Aging



- Responses ↓
- ↑ learning time needed for new activities
- ↑ difficulty in learning skills
- ↓ processing, response time and reaction time

Cognitive Changes due to Aging

- More deliberate, less frequent responses and less effective performance when pace is fast
- Cannot adapt as well
- Easily confused



Cognitive Changes due to Aging



- Mild short-term memory loss
- Motivation to learn ↓
- Feels threatened
- Difficulties in doing more than one task or dealing with more than one request
 - Unable to ignore stimuli

Cognitive Changes due to Aging

Reaction time – time it takes to begin an answer or a movement after someone asks a question or makes a request

- Changes vary
- Reaction time ↓ gradually after age 60
- Impaired by aging process, sensory ↓, or chronic disease



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10

Cognitive Changes due to Aging - Importance

- Important to be aware of changes in reaction time and pace accordingly
- Important to develop understanding of ways to help make up for slowed reaction time



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11

Workload of the Nurse Aide



THEY HAVE A WHOLE LOT TO DO IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME!!!!

When working with residents, nurse aides may accidentally quicken pace and expectations

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12

Effects of a Fast Pace on an Older Resident

Can negatively affect older resident's ability to learn, perform a task, or maintain motivation

Older residents tend to be more cautious and less willing to respond quickly

May choose not to do task

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Social Breakdown Syndrome

- May occur if resident is rushed and not allowed enough time
- Will keep quiet and not ask for slower pace and blame self for not being able to keep up
- Begins to feel incompetent with ↓ in self-esteem

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Social Breakdown Syndrome

Society becomes impatient....

...with those who cannot keep up

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Pacing and Patience

■ **Pacing** – awareness and adjustment of care based on how slow or how fast a person is

■ **Patience** – ability to deal with slowness, delay, or boredom without complaining or appearing rushed

Pacing and patience can be used to offset effects of a resident's slowed reaction time



Pacing and Patience – Importance

When allowed to take time and set own pace, residents

- Are better able to perform tasks or learn new things
- Have time to use assets to the best of abilities
- Feel better, competent and in control



Pacing and Patience – Nurse Aide's Role

- Slow down pace when working with residents
- Let the resident set the pace
- Ensure the resident is wearing hearing aid and glasses
- Tell resident ahead of time



Pacing and Patience – Nurse Aide’s Role



- Allow time to focus
- Allow time to think
- Give clear, short, easy instructions
- Relate new information or tasks with past

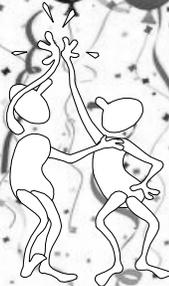
Pacing and Patience – Nurse Aide’s Role



- Use simple words
- Show the resident what is to be done
- Allow resident to look at equipment

**PRAISE
RESIDENT WHEN
TASK IS DONE**

Congratulations



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