N.C. Nurse Aide I Curriculum

MODULE R
Cognitive Changes Due to Aging

Objectives

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

Cognition

The manner in which messages from the brain are changed, stored in memory, and later recovered from memory, and later used to answer questions, respond to requests, and perform tasks.
Cognitive Changes due to Aging

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

- Healthy older adults – no notable decline 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

- 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 ↓
Cognitive Changes due to Aging

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

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

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

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

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
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

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 loss in self-esteem

Social Breakdown Syndrome

Society becomes impatient....

....with those who cannot keep up
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.

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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

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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

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

PRAISE RESIDENT WHEN TASK IS DONE

Congratulations
The End