

NC Department of Health and Human Services
NC Nurse Aide I Curriculum

Module R
Cognitive Changes Due to Aging
July 2019


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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Cognition

The manner in which messages from the five senses are changed,




stored in memory, recovered from memory, and later used to answer questions, respond to request, and perform tasks

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The Healthy Aging Brain

THE BRAIN
Use it or lose it
Cognitive function is related to use

- No notable decrease in cognitive ability and the ability to learn in healthy older adults
- Thinking or problem-solving remains sharp




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Learning and Memory in Older Adults

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 their own pace
- Depends on memory




What is the definition of memory?

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Cognitive Changes Due to Aging (1)

- Size of neurons (brain cells) progressively decrease
- Total brain mass decreases



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Cognitive Changes Due to Aging (2)

- Responses slow down
- Increase in learning time for new activities
- More difficulty in learning motor skills
- Decreased processing, response time and reaction time



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Cognitive Changes Due to Aging (3)

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



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Cognitive Changes Due to Aging (4)

- Mild short-term memory loss
- Motivation to learn decreases
- Feels threatened when changes are evident in public
- Difficult to do more than one task or deal with more than one request
- Unable to ignore stimuli




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Cognitive Changes Due to Aging (5)

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


- Changes in reaction time vary
- Reaction time decreases gradually after age 60
- Impaired by aging process, sensory deficits, or chronic disease



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Understanding Reaction Time


- Be aware of changes in reaction time and pace accordingly
- Develop understanding of ways to help resident make up for slowed reaction time



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Workload of the Nurse Aide

NURSE AIDES HAVE A 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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Effects of a Fast Pace on an Older Adult


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



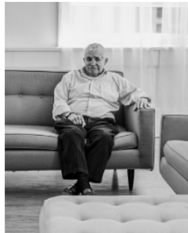
Resident may be less willing to complete task due to fear of failure



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Social Breakdown Syndrome (1)


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



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Social Breakdown Syndrome (2)

Society becomes impatient...




...with those who cannot keep up

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Pacing and Patience (1)

- **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 (2)

When encouraged to take time and set their own pace, residents:


- **Are better able to perform 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 – Role of Nurse Aide (1)

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



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Pacing and Patience – Role of Nurse Aide (2)

- Provide time for resident to focus
- Give resident time to think
- Use clear, short, simple instructions
- Relate new information or tasks with the past



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Pacing and Patience – Role of Nurse Aide (3)

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



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Praise Resident When Task Is Done

GREAT JOB!



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