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Maren Legg
mlegg@bgsu.edu

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Preserving Personhood in Individuals with Cognitive Impairment: A Caregiver's Role

Maren Legg
Bowling Green State University

Introduction

- Maren Legg
 - BGSU Undergraduate Student – Gerontology
- My personal experiences in informal caregiving.
- Who is it that you care for?



What is Personhood?

- “... standing or status that is bestowed upon one human being by others, in the context of social being. It implies recognition, respect, and trust.”
 - Kitwood, 1997
- Aspects of “self”, personality traits.
- **3 levels (Kitwood, 1997):**
 - **Biological Personhood**
 - (experience of pain, pleasure)
 - **Individual Personhood**
 - (communication, cognitive functioning)
 - **Sociological Personhood**
 - (perceptions of others, membership to societal groups)

VIPS Model of Personhood

- VIPS Model (Brooker, 2004)

VIPS Framework¹

V = Valuing People	Every person has value regardless of age or cognitive status.
I = Individualized Care	Using an individual approach that promotes the uniqueness of the individual.
P = Personal Perspectives	Acknowledge and understand life from the perspective of the person with dementia.
S = Social Environment	Providing a social environment designed to meet psychological needs of the individual.

Personhood Affected by Cognitive Impairment

Cognitive Impairment



Decline in brain functioning



Individual Personhood – Affected by Cognitive
Functioning



Decreased ability for individual with cognitive
impairment to preserve personhood and aspects of
personality/self themselves.

Behaviors that Threaten Personhood

- Overcompensating for losses in individual's abilities.
- Lack of attention to person's personality, personal dignity
- Disregard for personal choice.
- Elderspeak
 - Increased utterance/length of speech
 - Patronizing
 - Diminutives
 - Baby talk
 - Inappropriate collective pronouns
 - Ex. "*We're* going to take a bite now."

Potential Outcomes in Care Recipients

- Lack of respect and trust for care provider.
- Resistiveness to Care
 - Reactions of agitation, anger, aggression, screaming, kicking.
- Incompetence
- Lack of continuity of individual's self/personality.

Behaviors that Protect & Preserve Personhood

- Speech:
 - Speaking as you would to other adult peers.
- Providing opportunity for self-disclosure.
 - Reminiscing of life events, “past self” and present self.
- Providing opportunities to make personal choices and decisions.
- Providing independence as best as possible.

Potential Benefits/Outcomes in Care Recipients

- Continuity of selfhood.
- Maintaining engagement in activities of enjoyment → Improved/Continued quality of life.
- Respect and trust in caregiver is developed.
- Better responses to care.
 - Physical and emotional reactions to caregiver.

Importance of Preserving Personhood

- Continuity of care recipient's personhood, personality, aspects of self.
- Increase quality of life in care recipient.
- Decrease potential caregiver burden.
 - As care is received more positively when person-centered.
- Increase relationship closeness between caregiver and care recipient.

Practical Strategies for Preserving Personhood in Those You Care For

- **Getting Dressed**
- **Bathing and Using the Restroom**
 - **Meal Times**
- **Engaging in Favorite Activities**

Getting Dressed

Consider:

- Do they have a favorite outfit?
- What colors/types of clothing do they typically enjoy wearing?

Suggestions for Communication:

- “What would you like to wear today?” (When presenting 2-3 choices)
- Describe the feeling (touch) of a clothing - “Would you like to wear something soft/warm today?”



Ways to Provide Choice:

- A closet/dresser full of clothing options may be overwhelming.
- Instead → Pick 2-3 options to present as choices for the day's outfit.
- If these options are not desired, pick a few more options to make available.

Bathing and Using the Restroom

Consider:

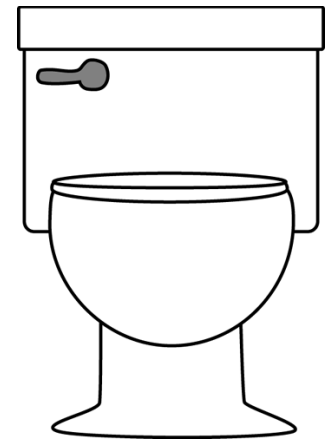
- What safety measures can you provide so that the individual can maintain privacy in the bathroom/shower.
 - Assistance bars near toilet
 - Assistance bars/seats in shower

Suggestions for Communication:

- Communicate when is a good time use the restroom based on daily schedule.
- Communicate the tasks that you are doing if assisting.

Ways to Provide Choice:

- As far as it is possible, provide the care recipient with privacy. Ask what they would like assistance with.
- If possible → stand outside the restroom door once the care recipient is in a place to complete a bathroom task on their own.



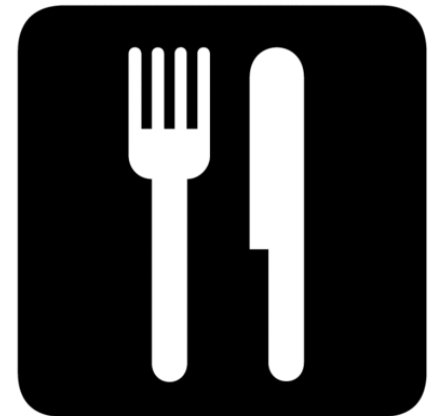
Meal Times

Consider:

- What are their favorite foods? Drinks?
- Is there a meal that they enjoy most?
- Time of day for meal times.

Suggestions for Communication:

- Keep the emphasis on the care recipient.
- “Would *you* like a bite?”
- “Here’s a bite of _____ for *you!*”
 - Specifically use if one is unable to feed themselves.
- Describing tastes and smells of food to initiate eating.



Ways to Provide Choice:

- When choosing a meal or drink → Pick 2-3 options for what to eat or drink. Being asked general statements such as, “What do you want to eat/drink?” may potentially be overwhelming.

Engaging in Favorite Activities

Consider:

- Reflect on past and present personality, long-term activities they've enjoyed.
- Think about 5-6 activities they enjoy doing.
- How can you help maintain their engagement in these activities?
- Set them up for success!

Suggestions for Communication:

- “Would you like to do _____ or _____ today?”
- “How about we do _____ today!”

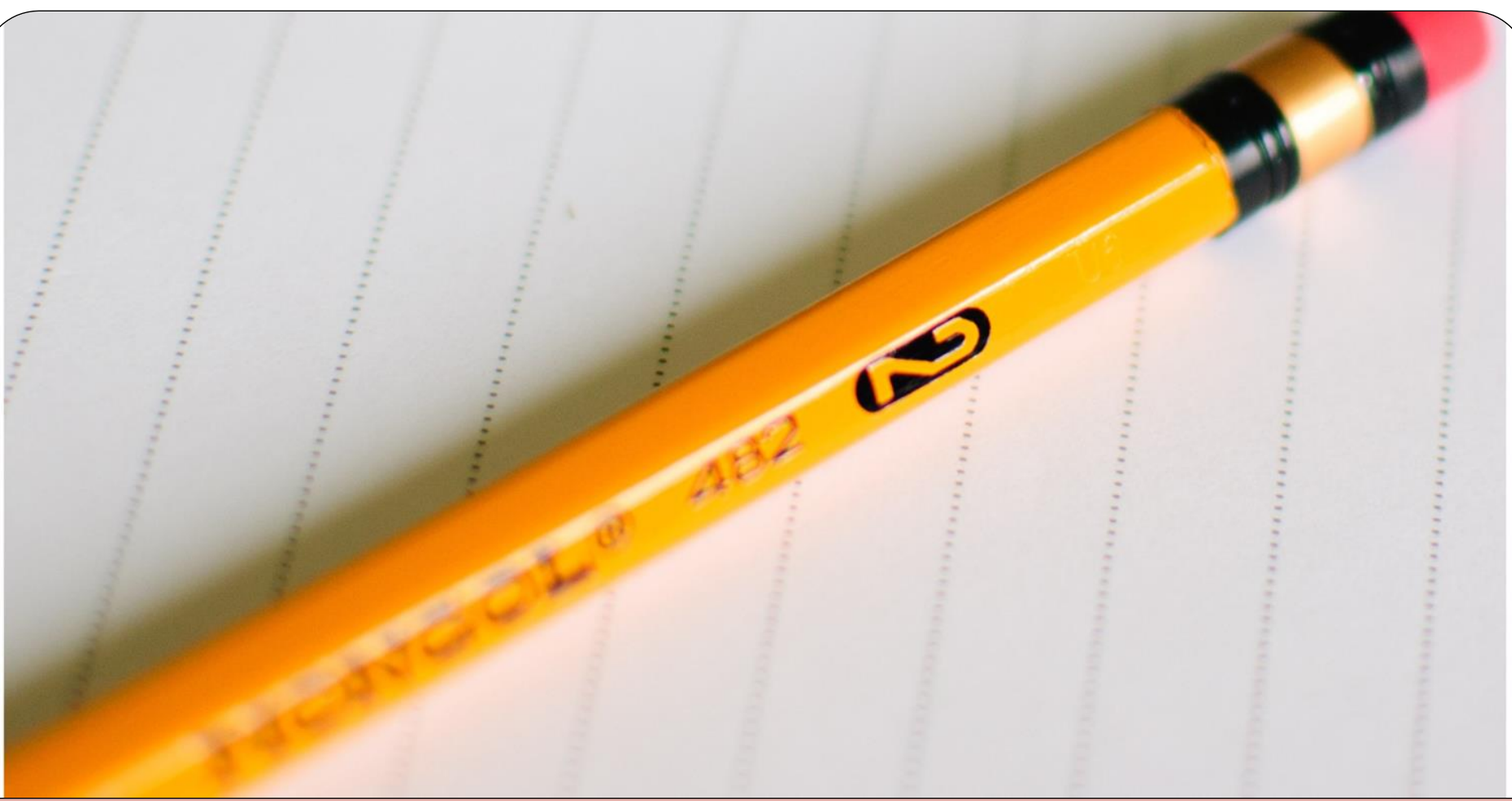


Ways to Provide Choice:

- Encourage care recipient to partake in ownership of favorite activities.

Group Discussion & Time for Questions

1. What was your knowledge of personhood and person-centered care prior to today?
2. What challenges have you faced as a caregiver?
3. What would you like to learn more about?
4. Questions?



Feedback

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