

**COMMUNICATION
BETWEEN RESIDENTS &
STAFF:
UNDERSTANDING VERBAL
& NON-VERBAL CUES**

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BACK TO THE BASICS

Communication skills of persons with dementia will gradually decline as the disease progresses. Challenges associated with communication can lead to frustration.

Difficulties finding the right words, describing familiar objects rather than call them by name; losing a train of thought, difficulty organizing words logically, relying on gestures rather than words.

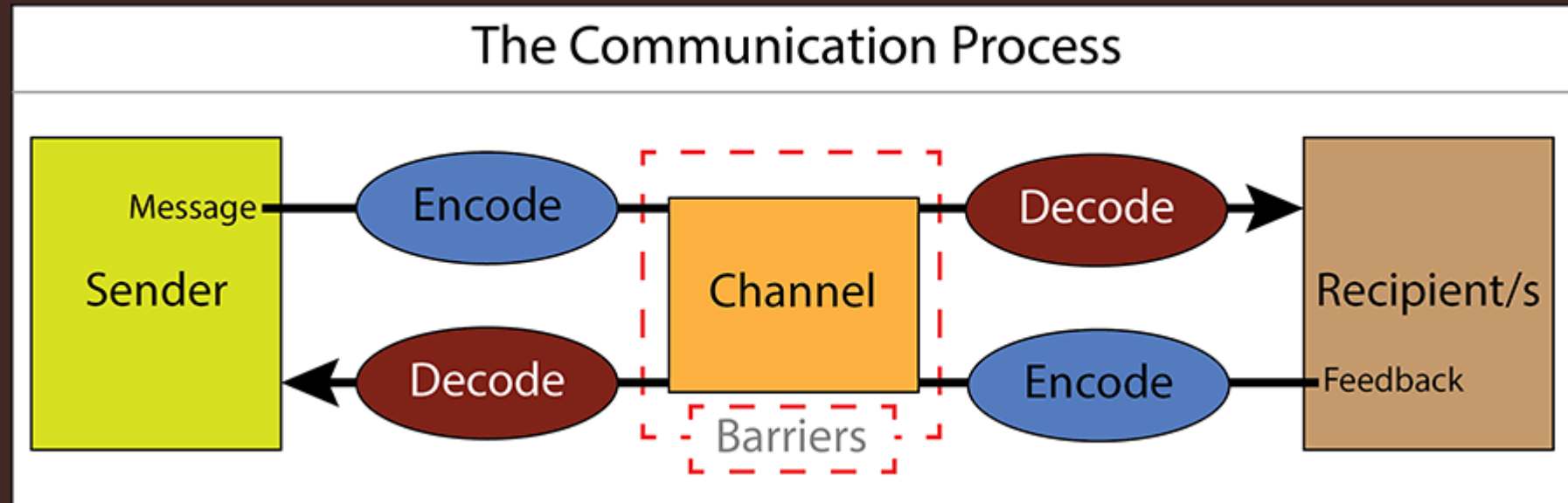
STAGES OF DEMENTIA

- **EARLY STAGE** – one is still able to participate in meaningful conversation and engage in social activities but may repeat stories or feel overwhelmed.
- **MIDDLE STAGE** – typically much longer than early stage and can last for many years. Best to ask yes or no type questions, one question at a time.
- **LATE STAGE** – may last several weeks to several years. Individuals rely on non-verbal communication. Your presence & friendship are the most important at this stage.

WHO WHAT WHERE WHEN WHY (5 W'S)

- Generally, we are either trying to get people to do things or we are trying to get them to stop doing things.
- Unfortunately, we tend to “react” rather than “communicate”.
- We would all like the recipe for how to communicate with individuals with dementia, we think there is a “secret sauce” that will work for everyone. That is not the case. We are all individuals and not the same based on having the same diagnosis. Both parties know at some point the “check engine light” went on and panic set in. Getting a diagnosis when that check engine light went on doesn't resolve the problem.

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS



COMMUNICATION IS A COMPLEX SKILL SET

- Communication is more than talking, it entails:
 - A) Active Listening
 - B) Context of Communication (environment, avoid distractions)
 - C) Effective Self-Expression
- In other words, communication means getting across what you really mean and having another person understand it. In working with individuals with dementia it is important to be patient, repeat, if necessary, stay calm and keep it simple.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- The communicator (Sender) must understand their audience and hone the message to reduce misunderstanding by the receiver.
- Consider the Receiver's lack of attention, interest, distraction or irrelevance to the receiver.
- **Psychological Barrier**
- The psychological state of the communicator will influence how the message is sent, received and perceived. Is either party stressed, depressed, anxious or angry?

- **Attitudinal Barrier**
- Behavior or perceptions that prevent people from communicating effectively.
- **Emotional Intelligence**
- The ability to recognize and manage one's emotions and the emotions of other people, both individual and in groups. This requires:
- **Empathy**
- Awareness of the needs and feeling of others and being able to see things from the point of view of others.

TIME MANAGEMENT

- The ability to get the job done in the time available!!!!
- There is never enough time, right?
- I have call lights to answer
- I have beds to make
- I have showers to give
- I have meal trays to pass
- My shift ends in 15mins

BEHAVIOR

- **ALL BEHAVIOR** is a form of communication. The expression of feelings needs and thoughts as a substitute for more direct/open communication by means of indirect messages. Much of our behavior is non-verbal.
- Types of Communication Behaviors
- **AGGRESSIVE** – frowning, rigid posture, using a loud voice and fast speech
- **ASSERTIVE** – conveys an open and receptive body language in a clear tone of voice while making eye contact
- **PASSIVE** – actively avoiding confrontation; difficulty in making decisions, agreeing with someone else's preferences, asking permission, or blaming others.

- Tending to fidget and avoids eye contact

- **BEHAVIOR TRIGGERS**

- Pain
- Change in environment
- Change in caregivers
- Change in routine
- Fear (perceived threat)

SUMMARY

- One method of communication does not fit all
- Every situation and every individual is different
- Individuals involved are not necessarily on the same page
- What worked today may not work tomorrow or what worked in the morning may not work in the afternoon
- It's all about relationships