

# Care 4U Conference

## Approaches to Responsive Behaviours: When a Person with Dementia Says “NO” to Personal Care



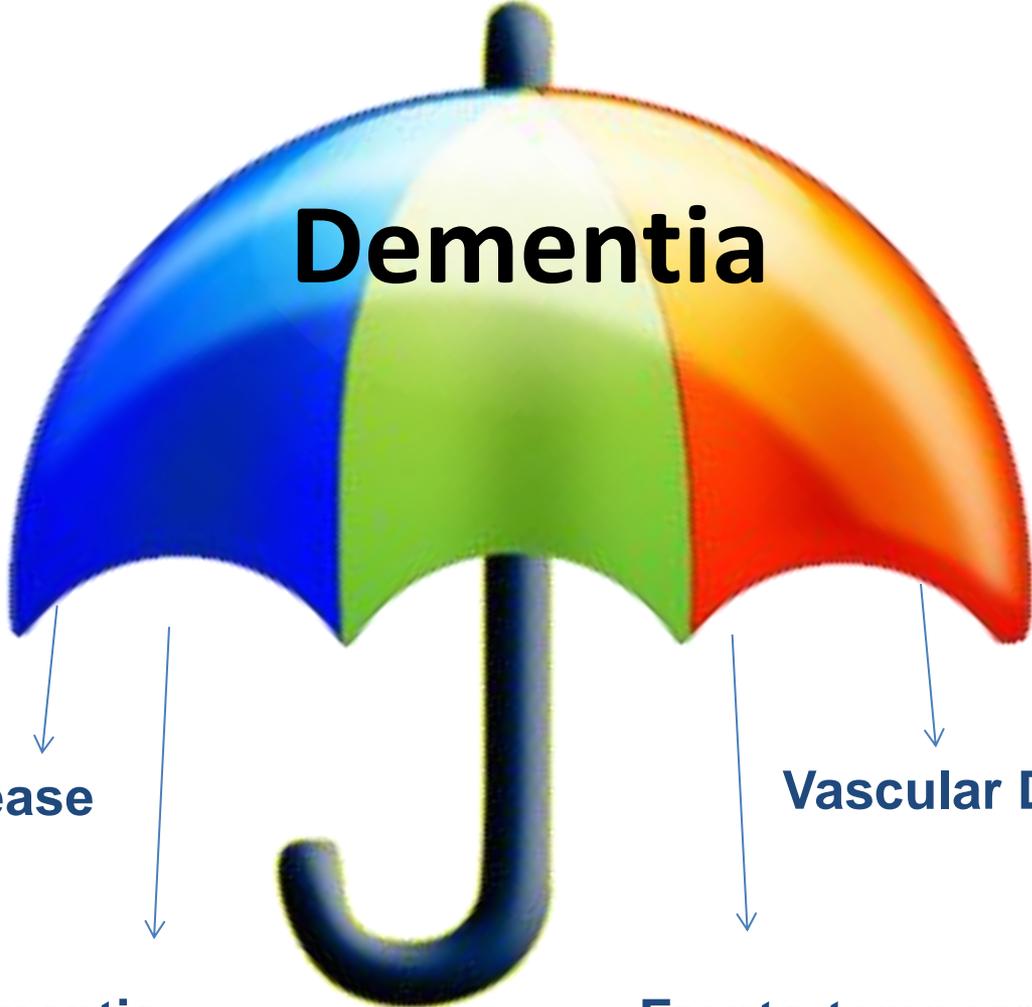
**Joyce Klassen**  
Dementia Education Project Manager

# Objectives

- To understand some of the reasons a person with dementia may say 'No'.
  - How we communicate our request
  - Personal Care
  - Bath
  - Food
  - Medication
  - Positive Physical Approach
  - Questions



# Dementia

A colorful umbrella with segments in blue, green, and orange, representing the umbrella of dementia. The word "Dementia" is written in large black letters across the top of the umbrella.

**Alzheimer's disease  
(AD)**

**Lewy Body Dementia  
(LBD)**

**Vascular Dementia (VaD)**

**Fronto-temporal Dementia  
(FTD)**

## To start the conversation - about why a person might say No

- How many of you would like to have your face washed by someone else?
- How many would like to take a pill that you did not know what it is?
- How many of you would like to have an acquaintance see you in the nude?

When a person with dementia is unwilling to do something that others want them to do, this may be described as 'refusal' or 'resistance'.



“Being forced into things makes us  
upset or aggressive, even fearful.”

## Christine Bryden

Person with Dementia



What is the person trying to tell us through their refusal?

- Is there a reason for their refusal?

**Remember:**

**ALL behaviour has meaning.**



# Why a Person may say 'No'

- The person does not understand what they are being asked to do.
- The person feels they are being talked down to or 'bossed about', and is refusing in order to keep a sense of control.

- Identification of different potential causes of behaviour change
  - History
  - Social
  - Personality
  - Environment



# Personality

Extrovert preferences	Introvert preferences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Talk out loud to sort through their ideas</li><li>■ Communicate freely with anyone about themselves</li><li>■ Visibly gregarious</li><li>■ Prefer communicating on the telephone or in-person</li><li>■ Usually prefer getting input from as many people as possible</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Think things through before speaking</li><li>■ Openly talk about themselves with people they know and trust</li><li>■ Visibly stay in the background</li><li>■ Prefer to communicate in writing including e-mail exchange</li><li>■ Prefer one-to-one conversations over meetings</li></ul>

# Why do behaviours happen?

- **Physical:** Do they seem to have discomfort or pain?
- **Intellectual:** Have they experienced memory changes?
- **Emotional:** Do they seem lonely or have they acted in unusual ways like being suspicious of others, hearing or seeing things we don't?
- **Capabilities:** Can they do more than you realize?
- **Environment:** Is there too much noise or too large a crowd nearby?
- **Social:** Does their childhood, prior employment or early adulthood offer any clues?

# Things to think about Responsive Behaviours

- Be aware of potential triggers and try to avoid them.
- Adapt verbal and nonverbal communication skills to the needs of the person.
- Engage the person in meaningful through such outlets as familiar activities, support groups and day programs.
- Maintain a daily routine.

# Communication

## ✓ Do

- Introduce yourself.
- Use humour and smile.
- Go at their pace.
- Use visual cues and gestures for directions.
- Accept inappropriate answers or nonsense words.

## Don't



- Argue.
- Say “Don’t you remember”.
- Correct their ideas or scold them.

# Communication



**Alzheimer Society**  
MANITOBA  
*Dementia Care & Brain Health*

# Why a Person may say 'No' to Personal Care



- Personal care is an intimate activity.
- Pain – is often underestimated in people with dementia.

# Why a Person may say No to a Bath?

- No sense that bathing is needed
- Sense that bathing has already happened
- Need for privacy
- No sense that they need assistance
- Dislike of the space
- Fear of falling, water, experience, cold
- No understanding what is happening

# Some tips...

- Let the person do as much as possible and feel in control
- Have the bathing supplies ready to go.
- Make the room comfortable.
- Monitoring water temperature.
- Protect the person's dignity and privacy.

- A technique to help....

# Approach to Responsive Behaviours

- Positive physical approach. – Teepa Snow
- Orient the person to the topic or what you want to do.

# Your Approach



- Use a consistent positive physical approach
  - pause at edge of public space – 6 ft out
  - gesture & greet by name – open palm by face
  - offer your hand & make eye contact
  - approach slowly within visual range – hand out
  - shake hands & maintain hand-under-hand
  - move to the side
  - get to eye level & respect intimate space (arm's length)
  - wait for acknowledgement

*Care Partner Support Tips*

Positive  
Approach<sup>®</sup>  
to Care

[www.TeepaSnow.com](http://www.TeepaSnow.com)

# Using Hand-under-Hand to Assist with Getting Dressed

Shirts and Coats

# Brushing Teeth – Teepa Snow



**Alzheimer Society**  
MANITOBA  
Dementia Care & Brain Health

# Why a Person may say 'No' to Food

- Difficulty using cutlery.
- Difficulty seeing and recognising food.
- Not enough contrast.
- Poor fitting dentures.
- Sore gums or teeth.
- Do not like the food.
- Not hungry.



## Dining with poor contrast



## Dining with good contrast



# Why a Person may say 'No' to Medication

- The medication may cause unpleasant side effects that they have are not able to describe verbally.
- They do not understand or have forgotten what the medication is for.



# Guiding Principles

- It is a fundamental human right to say 'no'.
- It is essential to understand the person's reason for refusing and to address this.
- Not forcing care doesn't mean not giving care.

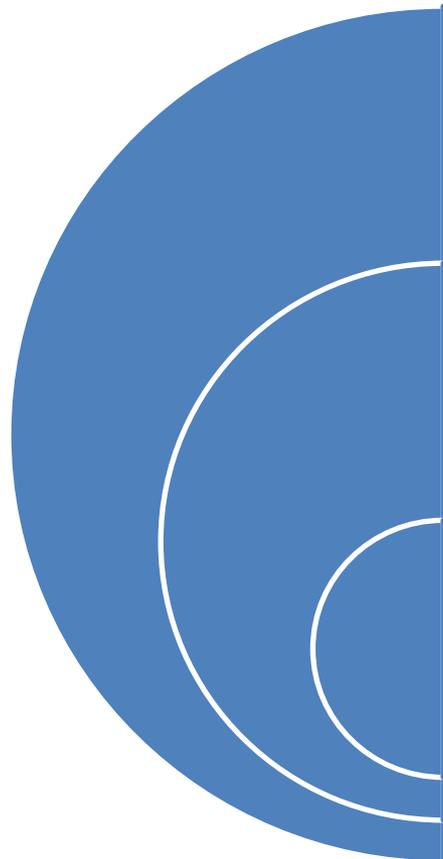
# Strategies for getting our Approach Right

- Give clear explanations and repeat as necessary.
- Work to build a closer relationship with the person, showing that they are valued as a person and not just seen as the focus for a care task.
- Ensure that the pace is one the person feels comfortable and safe with.

# Strategies for getting our Approach Right

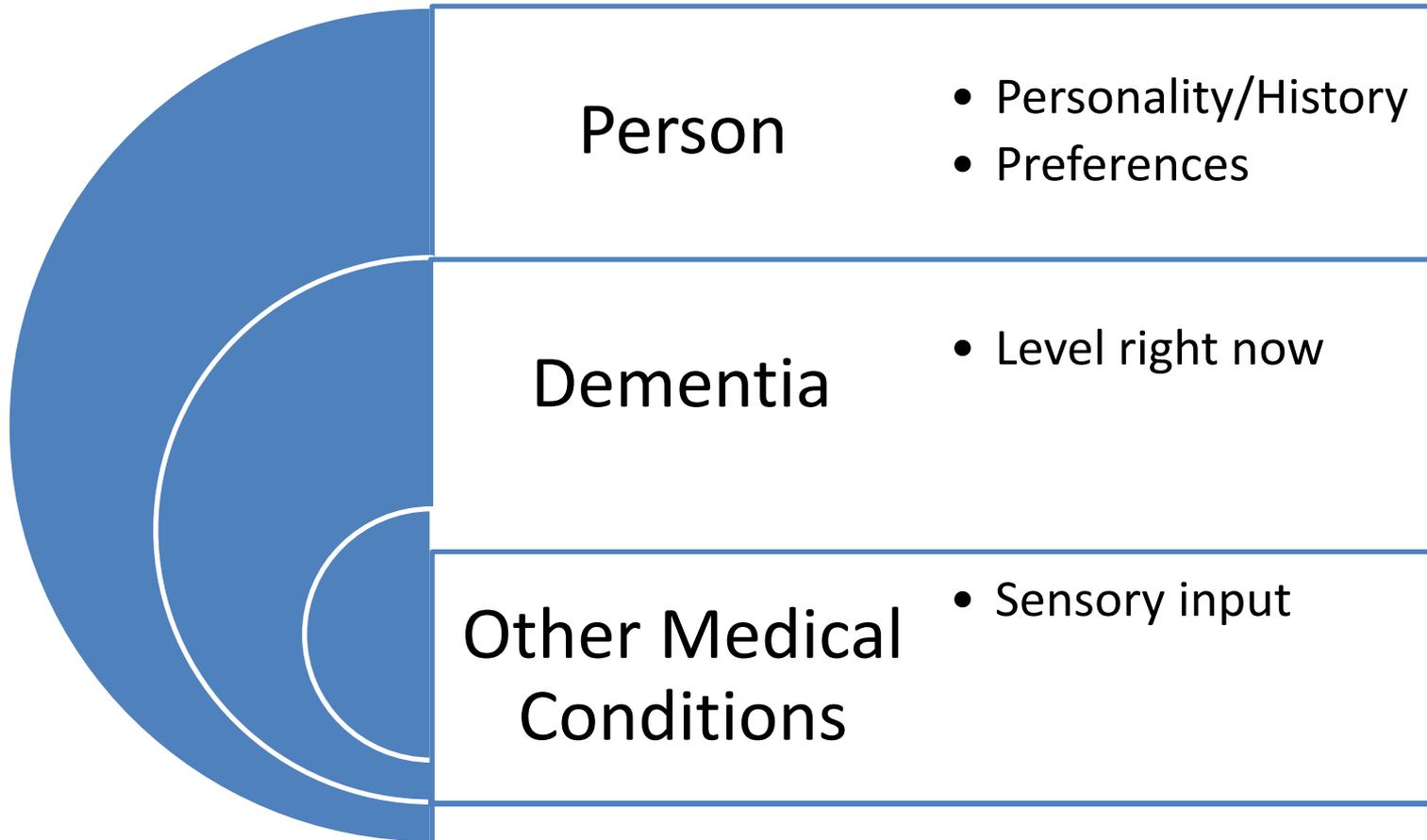
- Show the person respect.
- Enable the person to do everything that they can still do for themselves.
- Help the person to have a sense of achievement.

# What you can control?



Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Setting , sounds</li><li>• Sights</li></ul>
The whole day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How things fit together</li></ul>
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Words, tone of voice</li><li>• Reactions</li></ul>

# Not in your Control



# We need to ask...

- What will happen if the person doesn't do the thing that I want them to do right now?

- “The very biggest lesson I’ve learned is to see things through my husband’s perspective, not my own.”

- Judy Southon , Family Care Partner





**Alzheimer Society**  
MANITOBA  
*Dementia Care & Brain Health*