



Duke Dementia Family Support Program

Caregiver Connections **An Educational Webinar Series with the Experts**

The presentation will begin shortly.

**dukefamilysupport.org
919-660-7510**

Supporting Communication in Dementia

A Guide for Care
Partners and Families

About Me



- Daria Borowski M.S., CCC-SLP, CDP
- Owner of Stronger Pathways
 - Mobile Outpatient Company
 - Telehealth
 - Caregiver Support
 - Cognitive Groups
 - Accept most insurances

Objectives

- Why word-finding difficulties happen in dementia
- Role of an SLP
- Compensation vs Rehabilitation
- How to best support communication
- Tools and techniques to help your loved one express themselves

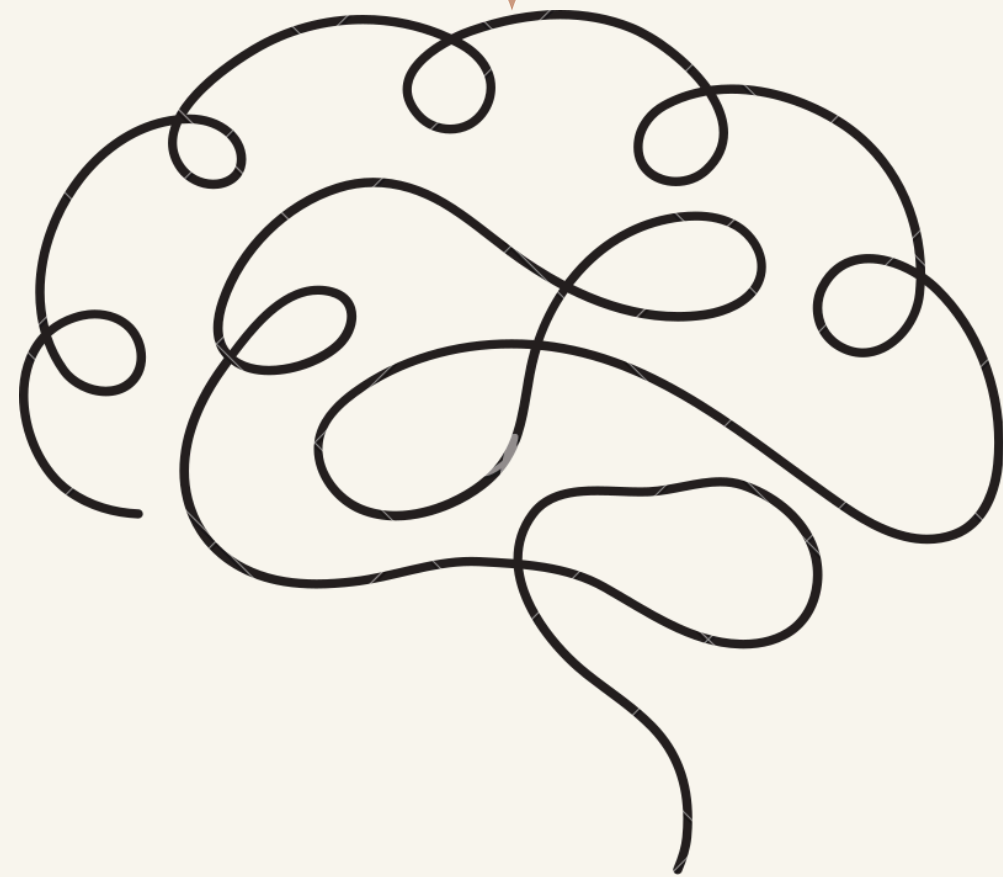
Take a breath

- I acknowledge that this can be difficult to talk about
- I acknowledge that it's easy to sit here and give recommendations, and the reality of being a family member/care partner is much different
- I see you

Communication

According to the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA): Communication is the active process of exchanging information and ideas. Communication involves both understanding and expression. Forms of expression may include personalized movements, gestures, objects, vocalizations, verbalizations, signs, pictures, symbols, printed words, and output from augmentative and alternative (AAC) devices

Types of Dementia



Alzheimer's Disease



Frontotemporal Dementia

- Behavioral variant frontotemporal dementia (bvFTD)

Changes in personality and behavior

- Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA)

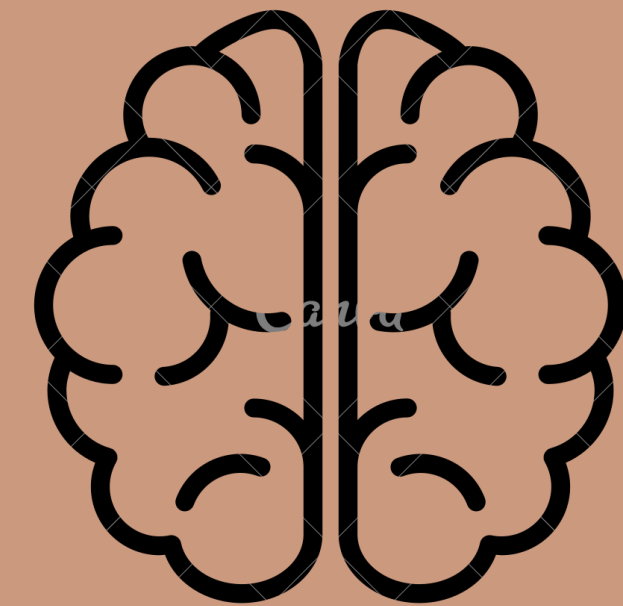
Affects language, speaking, writing, and comprehension

Semantic Variant: lost ability to understand or formulate words in spoken sentences

Nonfluent/Agrammatic variant: speaking is hesitant, labored or ungrammatical

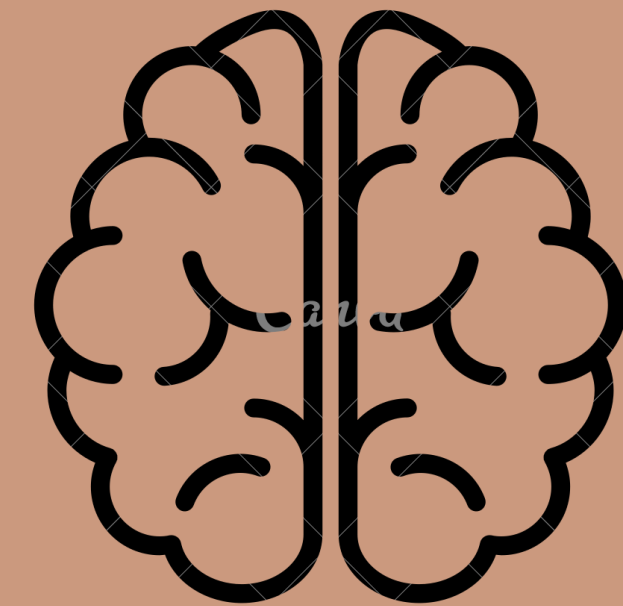
Logopenic (lvPPA): difficulty finding words when they are speaking (pauses, hesitations, circumlocution)

Common Communication Difficulties in Dementia



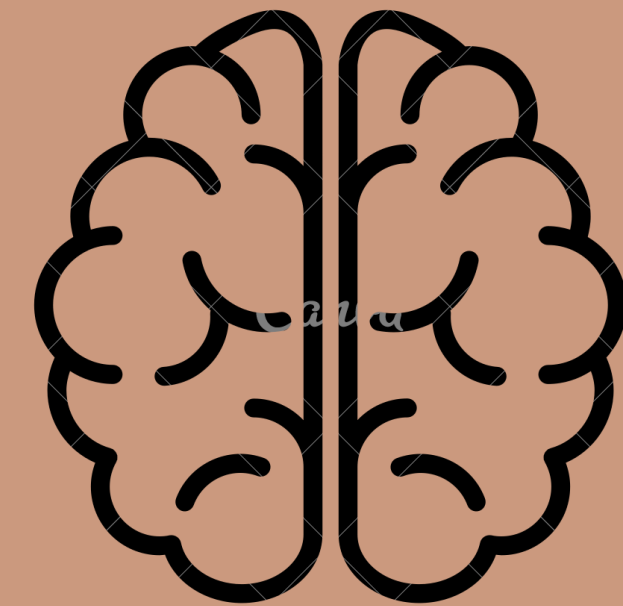
- difficulty starting a conversation
- difficulty maintaining a conversation
- difficulty interpreting facial expressions
- apragmatism: difficulty conveying or comprehending the intended meaning of a message

Common Communication Difficulties in Dementia



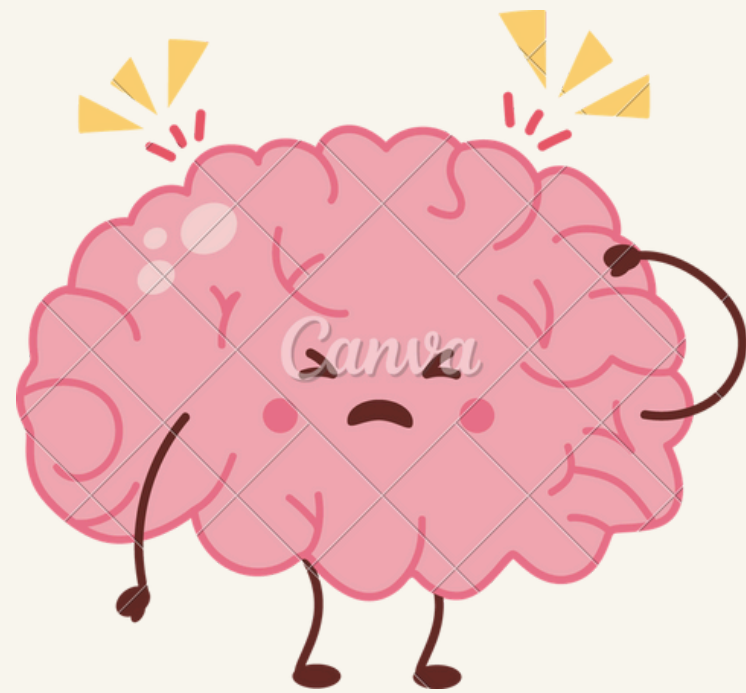
- less concise discourse with fewer ideas
- using fewer words
- perseverations (i.e. asking the same question)
- word finding difficulties
- tangential communication
- circumlocution
- grammatical errors
- jargon/loss of meaningful speech

Common Communication Difficulties in Dementia



- impaired ability to compose meaningful written language
- difficulty understanding spoken and written language
- auditory and reading comprehension may be impaired
- difficulty following multistep commands
- Echolalia-- repetition of utterances

Communication Breakdowns



- Frustration
- Resentment
- Needs not getting met
- Assumptions

We have to be the ones to adapt our communication
to better support their communication

We need to have realistic expectations for our loved
one

We want to focus on strengths

It has to be a team effort

Role of the SLP

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) help individuals with dementia manage word-finding difficulties by assessing communication skills, identifying patterns of impairment, and providing strategies to support everyday interactions.

They offer personalized therapy that may include cueing techniques, communication aids, and caregiver education.

SLPs also teach families how to support their loved ones with patience and practical tools, emphasizing meaningful, person-centered communication that maintains connection and dignity throughout the progression of the disease.

Communication Partner Training

- Family
- Friends
- Caregiver
- Doctor
- Companion
- Therapist

Compensating vs rehabilitation



Environment

- Background Noise/Distractions
- Lighting
- Other conversations
- People moving around/visual distractions
- Face to face, getting their attention

Communication Tips

- Use closed end questions or yes/no questions
- Provide choices
- Use simple language
 - Rephrase as needed
- Multistep → single step
- Slow down
- What are they already communicating to you?
- Multimodal communication

Pen/Paper or a Whiteboard

Stefan

↳ ~~son~~

↳ brother





lives in V _ _ _ _ _





Communication Tips




- Allow wait time
- Pause or pause and come back
 - Acknowledge their frustration
- Time of day matters
- Calm/Friendly tone, match their emotion
- Ask one question at a time
- Focus on connection, not perfection
- Ask them!

Visual Supports



Free Time Activities



Read	TV / Movies	Pets	Friends
			

Crafts	Exercise	Workshop	Garden
			

Bake	Cars	Music	Fish
			

Family

	
Snoopy	Zach

	
Caroline	Linda



Coffee



Tea

YES



NO



Visual Routine/Steps

Morning Routine



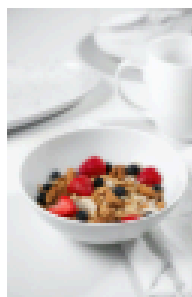
Get dressed



Brush Teeth


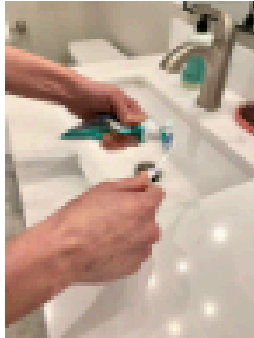



Brush Hair



Eat Breakfast

Visual Routine/Steps

Brushing Teeth	
	Toothbrush
	Toothpaste
	Brush Teeth

Engagement

- Creating opportunities for communication
- Enjoyable but doable
- Providing a role and sense of purpose

Questions?

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Citations

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.-a). Definition of communication and appropriate targets. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

https://www.asha.org/njc/definition-of-communication-and-appropriate-targets/?srsltid=AfmBOoqsuU3uRF8JFT36BOnsgmpb4BBKB_Q22lt4xulT59cy3t7OGZ7r

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.-b). Dementia. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. [https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/dementia/#:~:text=Economy%20of%20utterances%20\(using%20fewer,strays%20from%20the%20original%20topic.](https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/dementia/#:~:text=Economy%20of%20utterances%20(using%20fewer,strays%20from%20the%20original%20topic.)

Visual Supports Created using Honeycomb Speech Therapy



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Thank you for joining us today!

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