I'm Still Here:
A Breakthrough Approach to Understanding Someone with Alzheimer's Disease

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Hearthstone’s Mission:

Creating residential treatment centers where people with Alzheimer's and related disorders can flourish.

Our treatment programs incorporate the most recent research in staff training, activities programming, physical environment and health services. By bringing together all aspects of care in a coordinated approach, Hearthstone is able to help our residents achieve improved functioning and quality of life.
Hearthstone Locations:
Hearthstone’s World-wide Affiliate Network
Why “I’m Still Here?”

• “I’m Still Here is an invitation to a different world view ... how partners see the illness – both positively and negatively – has a major impact on the partner with the illness.”

• - John Zeisel, Ph.D.
Why “I’m Still Here?”

• “I advocate treating people living with Alzheimer’s as ‘people’ first and then as those with an illness.”

• “I advocate including people living with Alzheimer’s in society – at museums and theaters, among other places.”
The Problem with “Problematic Behavior” in Persons with Dementia

**THERAPEUTIC NIHILISM**

- The belief that, because a person has dementia, he or she cannot learn, cannot improve, cannot be helped.

- All that is possible is to be patient with them and deliver palliative care.

- Just keep them busy.
“Knowing what we must do is neither fundamental nor difficult, but to comprehend which presumptions and vain prejudices we must rid ourselves of … is most difficult.”

-- Maria Montessori
“Problematic Behavior” in Persons with Dementia

• We assume that human behavior is not random.

• When confronted with “problematic” behavior, we must always ask “WHY is this happening?”
  -- The answer CANNOT be “Because they have dementia.”
“Problematic Behavior” in Persons with Dementia

- Cohen-Mansfield suggests that “problematic behavior” is the result of attempts to meet basic human needs that are currently not being met.
“But if we observe them closely, we notice that they do not listen to the answers given them, but simply keep repeating the questions. What seems to be an eager curiosity is in reality a means of keeping a person they need near at hand.”

-- Maria Montessori
“If a person flees from a place, it is because he has not found in it that which he needs; yet he can always return if there is a change in the environment from which he fled.”

-- Maria Montessori
“If we have neither sufficient experience nor love to enable us to distinguish the fine and delicate expressions of the (person’s) life, if we do not know how to respect them, then we will perceive them only when they are manifested violently.”

-- Maria Montessori
“The skills and capacities of people living with Alzheimer’s that don’t diminish over time, or do so more slowly, provide windows for connection and communication.”

-- John Zeisel, Ph.D.
“We take note of all the details of a disease and yet make no account of the marvels of health.”

-- Maria Montessori
DECLARATIVE MEMORY: An Impaired System

- Episodic memory
  - past events, autobiographical information
- Semantic memory
  - world knowledge, concepts, vocabulary

CAN retrieve some information through appropriate cueing.
“The greatest source of discouragement is the conviction that one is unable to do something.”

-- Maria Montessori
“Help those who are in search of activity and cannot find it.”

-- Maria Montessori
PROCEDURAL MEMORY

PRESERVED ABILITIES IN DEMENTIA

• Habits
• Location learning/Environmental Cueing
• Motor learning
• Classical condition
• Repetition priming
  – The ability to improve performance after initial exposure to information
RETROGENESIS: First-in/Last out Model of Cognitive Losses in Dementia

• Based on the work of Barry Reisberg, MD
• Assumes that in later stages of dementia, cognitive abilities are lost in REVERSE order they were acquired in childhood
• Examples are based on Piagetian theory and staging
  – OBJECT PERMANENCE
    • Appears in first year of life
    • Is maintained late into the course of dementia
  – SELF RECOGNITION IN THE MIRROR
ASSESSMENT

• We have developed an assessment tool using Montessori-Based activities – the MMP/MAS.
Maria Montessori

• Worked with children of lower economic status in the early part of the 21st century in Rome
• Designed educational activities for children *based on the abilities they had available*
• First to create environments to accommodate the physical and mental capabilities of children
“Their faces were expressionless, their eyes bewildered as if they had never seen anything before in their lives.”

-- Maria Montessori
Montessori-based Tasks

• USE EVERYDAY MATERIALS
• PROVIDES
  – Structure and order
  – immediate feedback
  – high probability of success
  – repetition
  – task break down
Montessori-based Tasks

• UTILIZE PROCEDURAL MEMORY
  – Skills
  – Habits
  – Motor learning
  – Repetition priming
  – This is similar to
    “UNCONSCIOUS LEARNING”
    in Montessori’s work
The Montessori Method

• A method of CREATING and PRESENTING activities based upon models of learning and rehabilitation.

• The goal of the Montessori method is to create persons who are as independent as possible, able to make choices, and who are treated with respect and dignity.
Montessori-Based Programming

- Materials are taken from the everyday environment (familiarity)
- Materials are designed to promote independence in daily living and positive engagement
- Each activity is presented at its simplest level.
- Each activity that follows builds upon the previous activity.
Montessori-Based Programming

ACTIVITIES:

• Are broken down into steps
• Provide immediate feedback, along with repetition
• Allow practice as well as closure
PARALLELs: Montessori-Based Activities & Rehabilitation

• Circumvent deficits
• Allow independent functioning
• Engage in meaningful activity
• Provide feedback and success
• Enhance self-esteem
• Let function at highest possible level
• Provide meaningful social roles
Montessori-based Activities
Focus on Engagement

• If a person with dementia is engaged in a meaningful activity, the person cannot simultaneously be exhibiting problematic behavior.
Montessori-based Activities
Focus on Engagement
Montessori-Based Activities Related to SLP/OT Goals
Montessori-based Activities
Focus on Engagement
Montessori-based Activities
Create Meaningful Social Roles

• If we are to create a sense of community and a social model of care delivery for persons with dementia in long-term care settings, we must create meaningful social roles.
Montessori-based Activities
Create Meaningful Social Roles
Montessori-based Activities
Create Meaningful Social Roles
Montessori-based Activities
Create Meaningful Social Roles

Welcome. We are glad you are here. If you ever have any questions, just ask one of the staff or us. We are friendly and happy here. We look forward to getting to know you, and you getting to know us.

Sincerely,
- The Welcome Wagon Committee
Montessori-Based Programming:
Use materials that clients can hold/manipulate
Montessori-Based Activities
Hospice Care
If there is one single thing to look for in selecting a group or organization to turn to for help, it is how compassionate it is.

How would a highly compassionate organization differ from a less compassionate one?

Some of the ideas we’ve explored are having staff members treated with the same dignity and respect as (residents), that each person’s lifestyle would be accommodated, and that fun and joy would be part of our culture.

Our commitment is to make compassion the “visible” ingredient in health and healing.

-- John Zeisel, Ph.D. from “I’m Still Here”
“A social change of this type cannot come from the ideas or energies of individual reformers but from a slow and steady emergence of a new world in the midst of the old...”

-- Maria Montessori
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