

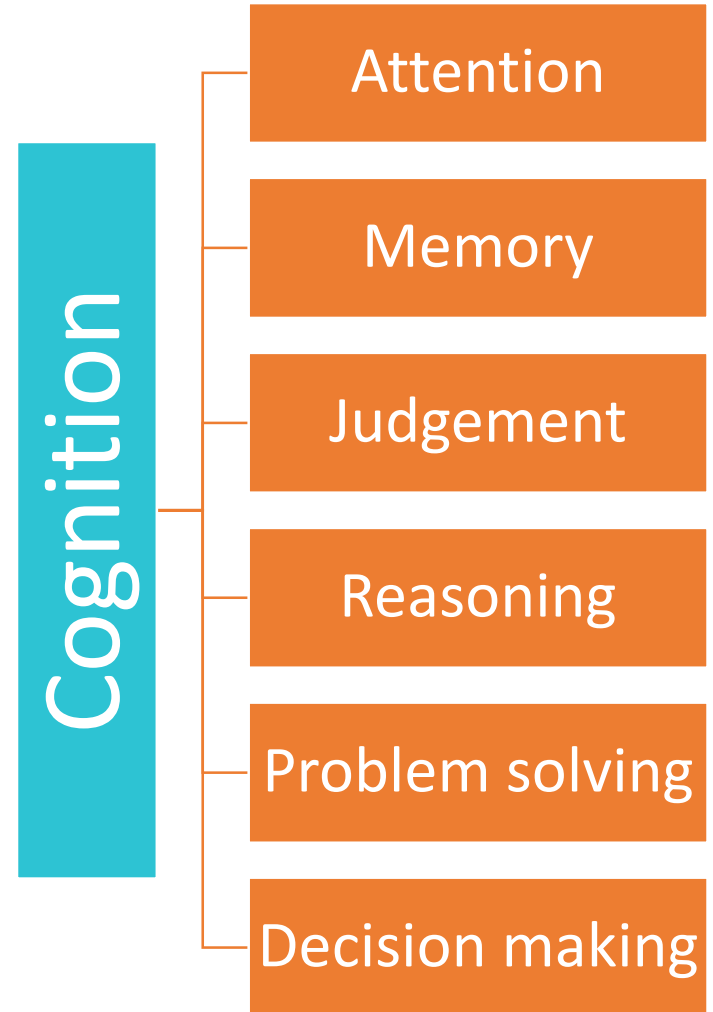
# Activities for Caregivers to Keep Older Family Members Engaged

Meaningful activities for older adults



# What is Dementia?

- Dementia doesn't just affect memory. It affects all aspects of cognition.
- Dementia refers to the symptoms that occur when something is physically changing in the brain.
- Dementia is an umbrella term. There are many causes and over 80 different types.
  - Most common: Alzheimer's Disease
  - 2nd most common: Vascular Dementia



# What is early stage dementia?

Disrupts daily life and is noticeable to others

## Your person ...

- Likely can still do many things themselves
- “Quality” of performance may be affected
- Less able to anticipate mistakes, but recovers relatively quickly and may correct self
- Likes the familiar; has difficulty with change
- Problems with short-term memory
- Impaired executive functioning

## Symptoms impact daily life ...

- Often forgets conversations or appointments
- Routinely misplaces wallet, keys
- Often cannot find the right word
- May repeat stories and questions
- Trouble remembering directions when driving, even in familiar places
- Struggles to keep track of bills
- Withdraws from social activities
- May be more irritable or angry than usual

# Common challenges

Early stage dementia

## Apathy

- Activity is too challenging
- Previous interests do not match current interests

## Embarrassment

- Concerned that others may notice symptoms

## Fatigue

- Tired , frustrated, or overwhelmed more quickly and more often

## Anxiety, fear, confusion

- Overload

# Common challenges and strategies to try

Early stage dementia

## Apathy

- Agrees ahead of time and changes mind
- Doesn't feel like it
- May be more noticeable if experiencing social isolation or loneliness
- **Strategies to try:**
  - Screen for depression
  - Visual reminders: white boards, daily or weekly calendars
  - Conversation: Considering discussing how the person feels about participating in the activity
  - Agreements: Try three times, mark on calendar, try new activities

# Common challenges and strategies to try

Early stage dementia

## Embarrassment

- Concerned that others may notice symptoms
- “I just don’t like it”
- **Strategies to try**
  - Talk about it: discuss stressful situations ahead of time, aspects that are difficult, and what support is preferred by person

# Common challenges and strategies to try

Early stage dementia

## Fatigue

- Tired , frustrated, or overwhelmed more quickly and more often
- **Strategies to try**
  - Have a plan, talk about it ahead of time
  - Ask to have a 1-1 conversation in quiet place
  - Leave early
  - Go for a walk
  - Take a nap
  - Plan a quiet day around a scheduled activity
  - Watch for emotions and offer support

# Common challenges and strategies to try

Early stage dementia

## Anxiety, fear, confusion

- Emotions rise quickly and are larger –may seem like they come out of nowhere
- Giving up
- Over stimulation “this is too much”
- **Strategies to try:**
  - Deep breathing
  - Take a break
  - Breakdown the tasks into smaller steps next time
  - Soothing music
  - Ask to talk about it and you validate emotions



# How to adapt hobbies and activities

Early stage dementia

## Woodworking

- Challenges: safety, difficulty planning a project
- Strategies: lay out everything needed ahead of time, reduce distractions
- Example: Completing a birdhouse kit

## Virtual class at senior center

- Challenges: confusion, fear, embarrassment
- Strategies: support, plan time of day, ask person what aspect of activity is enjoyable and what level of support is alright
- Example: Try out a class online together. Let them know your own apprehensions and that you're happy to be doing it together.

## Taking Photos

- Challenges: reluctant to try something new, difficulty getting started
- Strategies: encourage, focus on process, utilize an expert
- Example: Switch to a camera or Polaroid rather than using a cell phone. Ask the person to find items in the house instead of going outside.

# Helpful strategies for any activity

Early stage dementia

Be intentional

- Set-up & support
- Example of completed activity
- Invite others
- Try new things
- Keep trying

Independent  
& Do-able

- Realistic expectations
- Process, not outcome
- Together / Independently

Communicate

- Ask them to help you
- Go slowly
- Verbal & written instruction

Focus on  
connection

- Support & encourage
- Frustration is natural
- Take a break
- Laugh

# Using Technology

Early stage dementia



## Try it out

- Use a device they do feel comfortable with (stream to TV from phone, call on phone, be an observer, etc.)
- Try with friends and family
- Three strikes rule

## Ask for Help

- Senior Planet videos
- Reach out to AGE or other support organizations
- Friends and family members
- Do it together
- Have a conversation

## Adapt

- Try it out and make adjustments
- Take away unnecessary items (keyboard, mouse)
- Technology challenges

# Virtual Connections

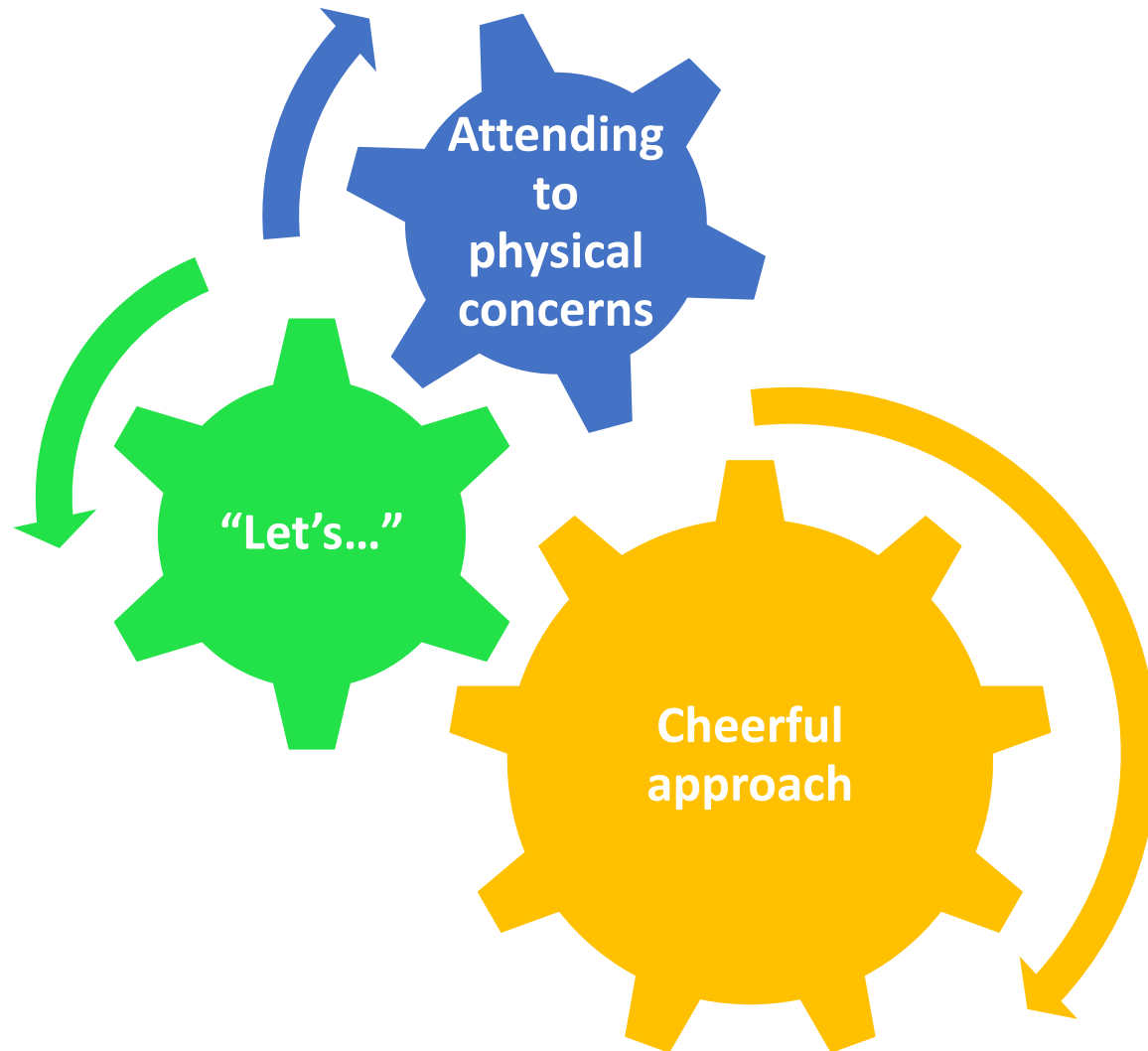
AGE of Central Texas is offering innovative virtual services to older adults and care partners to help you thrive. Virtual Connections is a monthly subscription program offering group virtual activities designed for different cognitive levels. In collaboration with you, we create an individualized service plan and then provide services or connect you to vetted service providers in the community to meet your goals and needs.



**“These video meeting groups have been a life line.”**

**“It is truly heartwarming to see all the lovely faces and reaction on the virtual visits. Such love and caring is making this isolation easier than it would be otherwise!”**

# The Importance of Mindset



# The Door



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# Middle stage dementia

## Your person is able to...

- Remember name but not address
- Less ability to concentrate
- Make choices
- Understand tone and body language

## Symptoms may include....

- Can't remember family names or recognize them
- Difficulty organizing thoughts and following logic
- Disoriented to time and place
- Problems understanding and expressing spoken and written language
- Mood shifts at any moment

# 4 Types of Activities

Middle stage  
dementia

Each activity should  
match what we can still do.

Productive

Leisure

Self-Care

Rest & Restoration



# Activities in Middle Stage Dementia

Each Activity should match  
what we can still do.

## Productive

- I make a difference
- I'm useful
- I have a reason

# Any "Job" that gives a sense of purpose

Polish silverware

Recycle- breaking  
down boxes

Folding and sorting

Vacuuming, sweeping and  
dusting

Making the bed

Pantry

Cutting Coupons

Thinking outside the box

Teachers need things cut all  
the time



# Activities in Middle Stage Dementia

Each Activity should match  
what we can still do.

## Leisure

- Feel good
- Passive or Active
- Depends on the person

## Bird watching

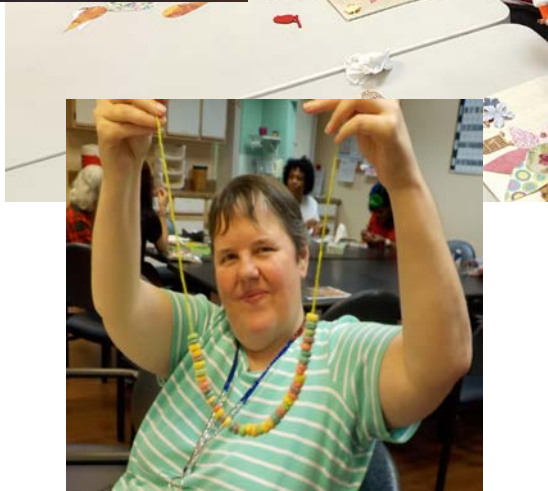


## People watching



## Passive Leisure Activity

# Active Leisure Activity



# Activities in Middle Stage Dementia

Each Activity should match  
what we can still do.

## Self-Care

- Taking care of  
our own body  
inside and out

# Self-care Activities

- Set a routine and try to keep to it
- Hydration
- Eating Healthy
- Exercise
- Toilet schedule
- Personal hygiene
- Nail care
- Keep body moisturized
- Clothing easy to put on

# Activities in Middle Stage Dementia

Each Activity should match  
what we can still do.



## Rest & Restoration

- How do I get charged up mentally, physically and spiritually



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Middle stage dementia

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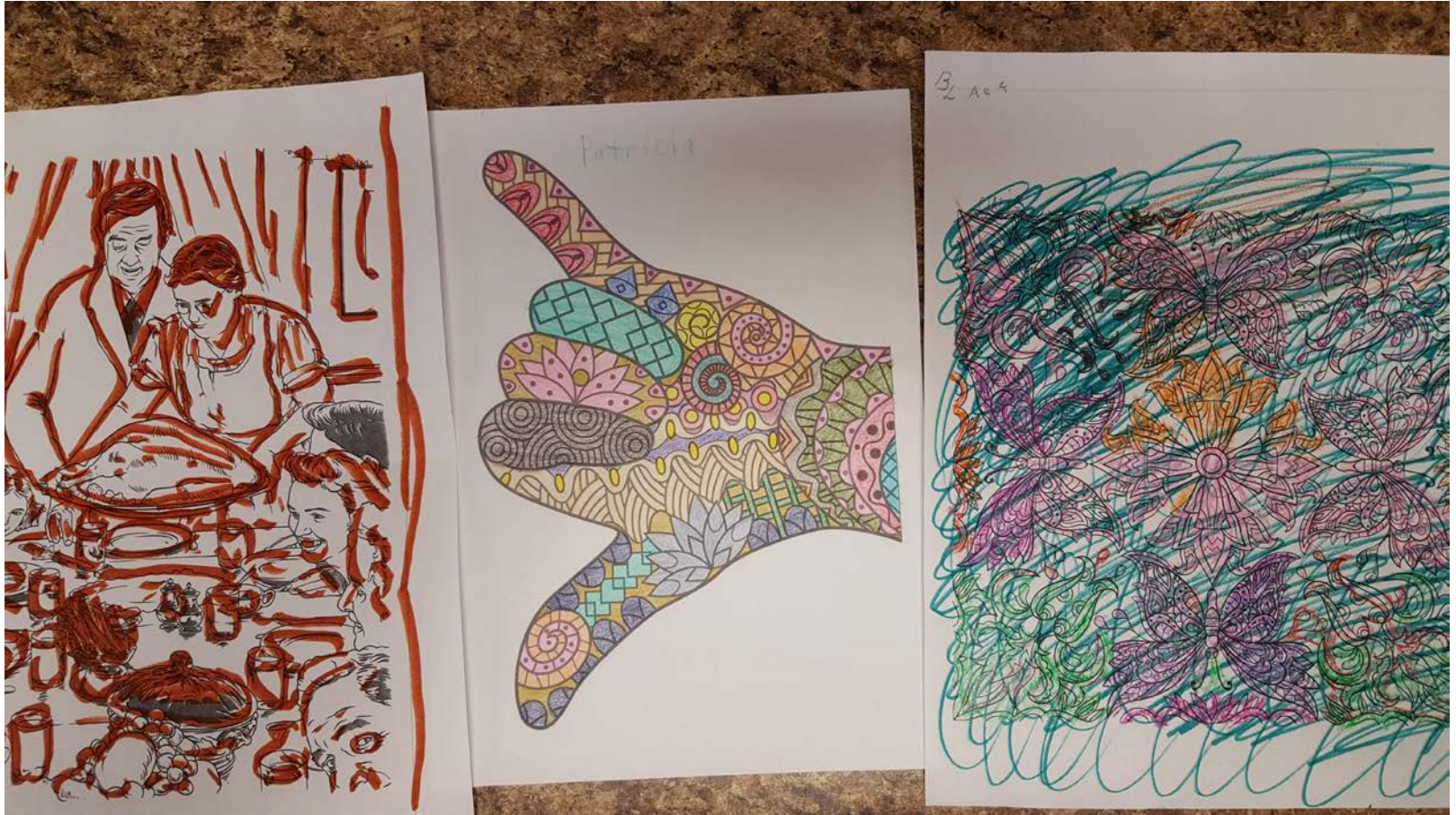
### Self-Care

- Taking care of our own body inside and out

### Rest & Restoration

- How do I get charged up mentally, physically and spiritually

# Focus on process not outcome



# My person has challenges with...

## **Vision:**

- Higher levels of lighting without glare
- Magnifying glasses, light-filtering lenses, telescopic glasses
- Use of “clock method” to describe where items are located
- Description of sizes, shapes, colors
- Large print items including playing cards, newsprint, books; audio books.

## **Hearing:**

- Use of amplifiers or headphones
- Decreased background noise
- Written instructions
- Use of gestures or sign language to enhance verbal communication
- Adapted TV (closed captioning, magnified screen)

## Activities

### Late stage

Has difficulty eating and swallowing

Needs assistance walking and eventually is unable to walk

Needs full-time help with personal care

- Playing their favorite music
- Read a book or short stories
- Look at old photographs together
- Lotion up
- Brush their hair
- Sit outside together
- Loving on a pet that is real or not

Thank you!

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