

UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITH PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

TRAINING FOR EMERGENCY RESPONDERS

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Buffalo and Pepin Counties*

- 2020: there are enough people in Wisconsin living with dementia to fill Lambeau Field and Miller Park = 123,000 +
- AD is not a mental illness



- 1 in 9 people over 65 have dementia
- 4% are younger than 65
- 1 in 3 seniors will die from AD
- 6th leading cause of death
- Every 66 second someone develops dementia in the U.S.
- More than 70% live in the community

What Is Dementia Anyway?

- Brain failure (2 or more areas).
- Not a specific disease, but a general term used to describe a wide range of symptoms.
- A complex syndrome of memory, mood, behavioral, & perceptual changes that evolve over time & vary among dementia type
- Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia...currently no cure.
- It is **NOT** a normal part of aging!
- Most common dementias are caused by slowly progressive diseases that are terminal.

Dementia

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graph TD; Dementia[Dementia] --> Treatable[Treatable Dementias]; Dementia --> Vascular[Vascular Dementias]; Dementia --> Mixed[Mixed Dementias]; Dementia --> Alzheimer[Alzheimer's Disease]; Dementia --> Other[Other Dementias]; Dementia --> Lewy[Lewy Body Dementia]; Dementia --> Frontotemporal[Frontotemporal Dementia];
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Treatable
Dementias

Vascular
Dementias

Mixed
Dementias

Alzheimer's Disease

Other
Dementias

Lewy Body
Dementia

Frontotemporal
Dementia

Myths & Facts

❑ Old/elderly

- ✓ Fact: There is a growing number of people who are diagnosed in their 30s, 40s, and 50s....even 20s

❑ Nursing Homes

- ✓ Fact: More than 70% of people living with dementia are living in the community

❑ Confusion/disorientation

- ✓ Fact: Confusion and memory loss is a classic symptom of Alzheimer's disease, but the symptoms involve much more than just memory loss

❑ Cannot Live Well

- ✓ Fact: People with dementia can live well with the support and help of family, friends, and the community

THINKING PROCESSES IMPAIRED BY DEMENTIA

Judgment

Attention

Perception

Reasoning

Organization

Memory

Communication

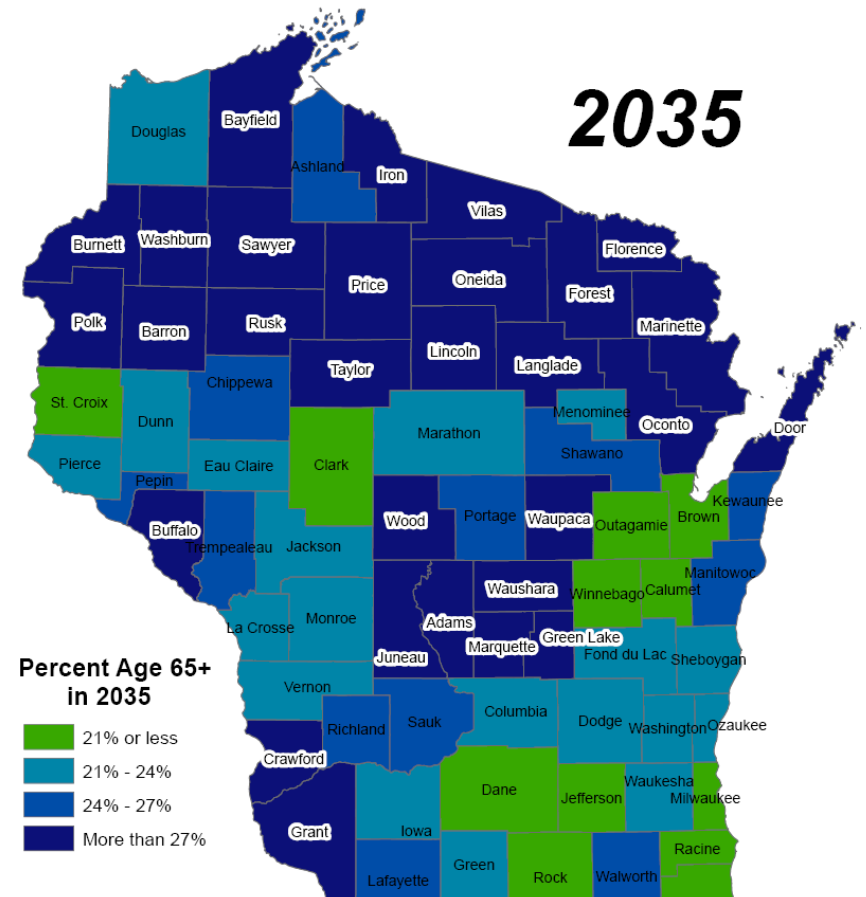
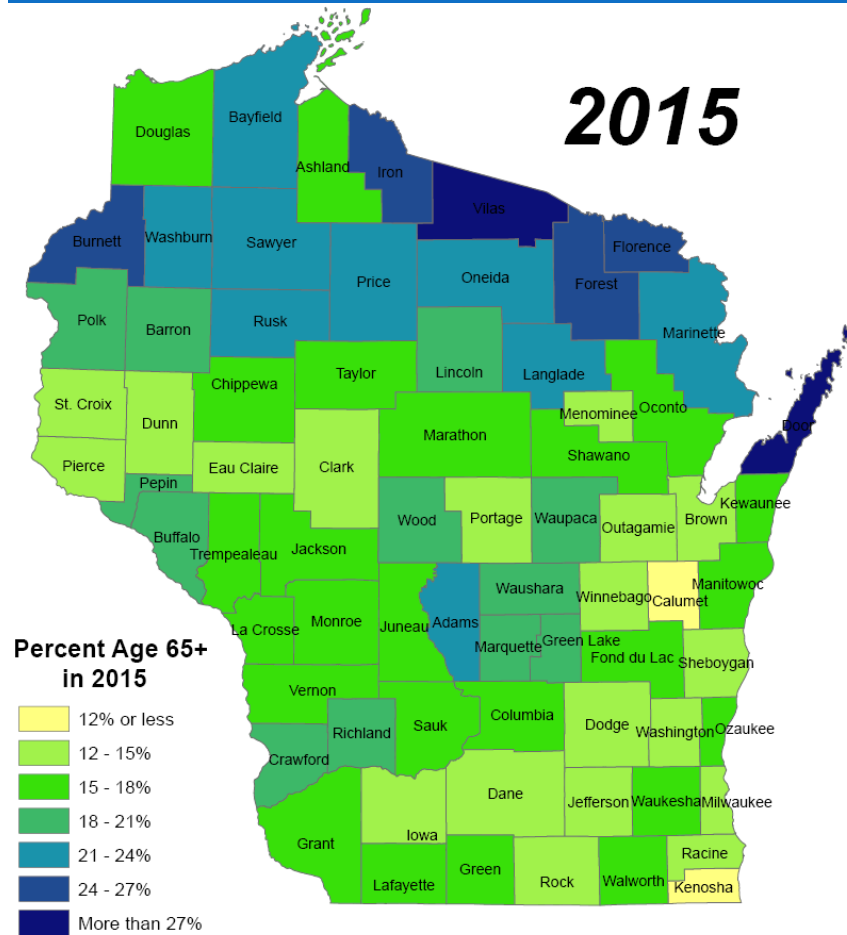
Abstract Thinking

Orientation to
Time/Place

Ability to Filter
Emotional
Responses

Awareness of
Socially
Appropriate
Norms

Wisconsin's Aging Population



Recognizing a Person with Dementia

□ Physical Clues:

- A blank or confused facial expression
- Unsteady walk/loss of balance
- Age (adults 65+)
- Repeats questions
- Inappropriate clothing for the season
- Actions (appears to be doing something that is unsafe, yet they are unaware of their actions)

□ Psychological Clues:

- Inability to grasp and remember the current situation
- Difficulty in judging the passage of time
- Agitation, withdrawal or anger
- Inability to sort out the obvious
- Confusion
- Communication problems
- Delusions/hallucinations
- Inability to follow directions

Common Communication Expressions & Distress

- Anger/agitation
- Anxiety
- Rummaging/looking for things
- Hallucinations/delusions
- Wandering
- Repetitive actions/words
- Disrobing
- Yelling/crying out
- Withdrawal
- Paranoia
- Crying
- Sundowning – increased energy in late afternoons
- Aggression/striking out

Your Approach – The TALK Tactics

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The TALK Tactics

- Take it slow
 - ▣ People with dementia may experience things as happening faster than they are
 - ▣ They may also become overwhelmed quickly and may feel that they are being attacked
 - ▣ Approach from the front line of view so they see you coming
 - ▣ Speak slowly and in a lower voice
 - ▣ A low voice may reduce anxiety or help to de-escalate a tense situation
 - ▣ Minimize distractions (crowds, background noise, radio background checks, etc.)

The TALK Tactics

- Ask simple questions
 - ▣ Avoid multipart questions and wordy instructions
 - ▣ Concise questions with yes/no or one-word answers have a greater chance of being answered successfully
 - ▣ Be patient when waiting for answers
 - ▣ You may need to repeat your question
 - ▣ Smile...do not talk down and avoid using honey, sweetie, etc.
 - ▣ Always treat with dignity and respect

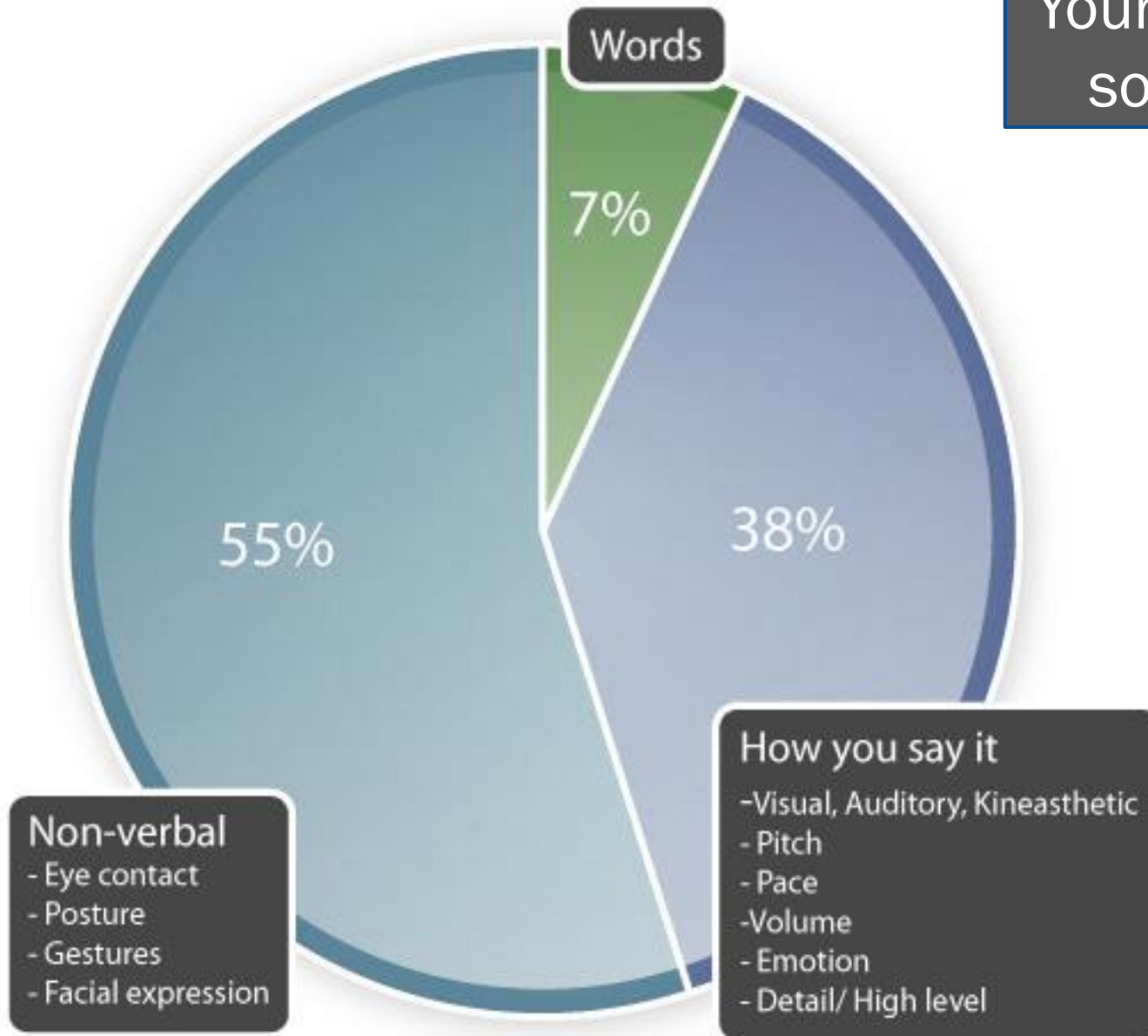
Your Approach

- Limit reality checks
 - ▣ Avoid correcting the person when they give an incorrect answer
 - ▣ Do not argue or try to reason
 - ▣ Redirect as necessary
 - ▣ If your approach or question does not seem to be working, make a connection to another event, place, or time
 - ▣ “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to upset you, how can I be of support/help?”
 - ▣ Validate emotions – “I can see that you are upset. That would bother me too.”

Your Approach

- Keep eye contact
 - ▣ Non-verbal communication is important to successful interactions
 - ▣ People with dementia tend to react very strongly to body language
 - ▣ Establish a positive rapport with the person by maintaining eye-contact, giving nods of approval, and being aware of your posture
 - ▣ Sensing your frustration or impatience, the person may become further agitated, may try to leave, or become more aggressive
 - ▣ Be reassuring

Your approach is
so important



De-escalating a Situation

- Remove the threat
- Create space
- Be on his/her side
- Get at or below eye level
- Use hand under hand
- Breathe in sync
- Calm voice
- Relax body
- Attend to needs
- Be willing to go where he/she is

Wandering

- ❑ 70% of people with dementia wander
- ❑ Wandering is considered an emergency
- ❑ If not found within 24 hours, 50% of people risk serious injury or death
- ❑ Wandering happens on foot, by car or via other forms of transportation

Wandering

- ❑ Silver Alert

Similar to an Amber Alert, Silver Alerts will go out by email, text message, or fax through the Wisconsin Crime Alert Network to notify the public that an adult with Alzheimer's, dementia, or other permanent cognitive impairment is missing

<http://www.wisconsincrimealert.gov/silveralert.html>

- ❑ Elderly male with dementia becomes upset with caregiver. He still lives alone and decides to leave on an ATV. After an extensive overnight search the male was found about a mile from home in a swampy area and transported to the hospital.

- ❑ Actions

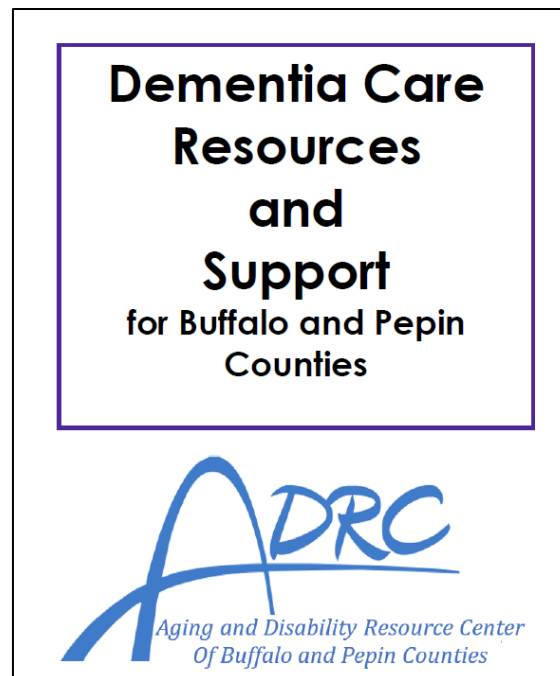
- What is their background?
- Have they wandered before?
- Are old, familiar places nearby?
- Are they going back to their workplace? Family home?
- What is a normal pathway for them?
- Have they been talking about something lately?

Purple Tube Project

- ❑ Designed to provide information on the Person with Dementia (PWD) that will help responders communicate and redirect effectively.
- ❑ Purple tube should be placed on the inside of the fridge
- ❑ Round Purple Sticker at top of the latching side of entry door indicates a PWD is living in the home
- ❑ Responders should check the purple tube for information on the PWD and things to talk about to keep them distracted and at ease, emergency contacts, most recent medications, power of attorney, and a photo to identify the PWD.

Dementia Care Resources and Support Guide

- Booklet of resources specific to Dementia Care in our counties and surrounding counties



Caregiver Registry

- Effort to work with Emergency Management/Dispatch/EMS
- Caregivers would voluntarily register themselves as a caregiver and the care recipient to the local Emergency Management/Dispatch
- If the caregiver has an emergency a red flag should come up that the person is a caregiver and has someone at home who will need to be checked on
- Also register care recipient with flag indicating they are a Person With Dementia (PWD)

Any questions?

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(she/her/hers)

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