Stressed Out: Occupational Therapy’s Role in Promoting Self-Care for Family Caregivers of People with Dementia
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FRAMEWORKS TO GUIDE CAREGIVER TRAINING

Competence-Environmental Press Framework (Lawton & Nahemow, 1973)

- Educating family caregivers to obtain that “just-right fit” between personal capabilities and environmental demands results in positive behaviors and enhanced quality of life for both the caregiver and the individual with dementia.

Cognitive Disabilities Model (Allen & Blue, 1998)

- Six Allen Cognitive Levels (ACL) that describe the complex and dynamic interaction between a person’s cognitive abilities and functional performance.

- Based on the ACL, occupational therapists can
  - Teach caregivers how to match abilities with tasks.
  - Provide suggestions that facilitate the person’s best ability to function within the least restrictive environment.
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Need-Driven Behavior Model (Algase et al., 1996)

- Persons with dementia have difficulty expressing their needs.
- Behavior is the result of an attempt to meet a basic human need that is not currently being met.
- Background factors cannot be controlled, where current factors may be, but awareness and understanding of both help with behavior guidance.

Progressively Lowered Stress Threshold [PLST] (Hall & Buckwalter, 1987)

- Stress threshold is lower in persons with dementia.
- Behavior is a result of excess environmental stress and caused by increasing anxiety.
- A person’s stress threshold shrinks both during the course of dementia and over the course of the day.
The ABC model can be used to teach the caregiver to identify the stimulus (antecedent) that triggers a specific behavior and clearly define and analyze the potential consequences. This includes both positive and negative behaviors.

- Caregivers can learn to evaluate each behavior and identify the specific antecedent(s) that can be enhanced, modified or eliminated.
- The process is cyclical, and the consequence can become a new antecedent for behavior.

Teaching the problem solving process offers caregivers a skill to use when new situations occur after occupational therapy service or training is complete.
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RESOURCES

Administration for Community Living, www.acl.gov. Government agency concerned with issues affecting older Americans. This site offers information about older Americans, legislation, and programs.


Alzheimer’s Disease Education and Referral Service (ADEAR), a service of the National Institute on Aging, www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers. Information and referrals, publications, database and resources about dementia.


Caregiver Action Network, caregiveraction.org/. Education, peer support and resources free of charge.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), www.medicare.gov. Overview of Medicare and Medicaid policy and regulations, and consumer literature about health-related services and benefits.

Eldercare Locator, www.eldercare.gov. Connection to local services for older adults anywhere in the US.

Family Caregiver Alliance, www.caregiver.org. Support services for those caring for people with Alzheimer’s disease and other neurocognitive disorders, as well as other conditions.

National Institutes on Aging, www.nia.nih.gov. Reliable health and resource information for consumers and professionals. Relevant topics include changes in intimacy and sexuality, wandering, bathing, grooming and dressing, and incontinence.


Next Step in Care Toolkit for Working with Family Caregivers offers tools and guidance for health care providers to create better care transitions: https://www.nextstepincare.org/providers/toolkit/

Rosalynn Carter Institute, www.rosalynncarter.org, offers information about caregiver assessment, interventions, including a caregiver intervention database, applying evidence to programs, making interventions effective, and related resources.
REFERENCES


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