

Baycrest

THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION

MEETING SENIORS' NEEDS FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION

This document was prepared by experts at Baycrest, which is the Toronto region lead for Behavioural Supports Ontario.



Behavioural
Supports
Ontario

Engaging Seniors with Dementia and Responsive Behaviours

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Behaviour is meaningful and often a reflection of a person's unmet needs. Seniors with dementia who are feeling lonely and under-stimulated will likely exhibit increased responsive behaviour. Individualized therapeutic intervention adapted from the Play Intervention for Dementia (PID) based on The Strategies and Skills For Learning and Development (SSLD) principles provides ways to positively engage seniors, to understand and address their needs and behaviours.

Below are some examples of how professional and family caregivers have successfully integrated therapeutic intervention to support seniors with dementia:

- *Scott used to be a community leader who protected others. His wife has identified his connection with a baby doll, with which he likes playing the role of protector/loving father. Allowing him time to interact with his baby doll every day and integrating his love for the doll in his personal care routine have helped to keep him calm so he no longer becomes verbally and physically responsive during care.*
- *Staff cannot figure out why Lucy calls out several times a day. They have identified that Lucy really loves singing the song "You are my sunshine". They use the song to help Lucy make the shift from calling out to singing, and then redirect her to doing some other fun things together.*
- *Ming often talks to her deceased family members as if they were around her throughout the day. Since her daughter and Personal Support Worker have set aside time to do regular therapeutic intervention (including playing with balls, tangram, colouring, etc.), Ming has become more joyful, present and ready to connect.*

Purpose		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get to know the person and their needs, not only their problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transform the caregiving relationship		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support individualized care planning to address unmet needs behind responsive behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve quality of life and quality of care
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Key Elements of Therapeutic Intervention

POSITIVE ENERGY

Bring in your positive energy. Bring out the capabilities of the person.

PRESENCE

Make a genuine connection with the person in the here and now.

RESPECT

Respect the person as they are. Follow their lead. Provide choices.

Positive energy - Try to connect with the person with an intention to share a delightful time. Pay attention to the positives and recognize strengths during the interaction: What does the person enjoy doing? What can they still do? What/who is important to them? What interests them? What gives them a sense of satisfaction? No need to emphasize winning or losing, or whether a game is played the proper way. Be ready to experiment and do not feel discouraged when you get stuck or do not see change right away.

Presence - Find out about the person's social history, but do not be restricted by the past. The person may still be able to develop new interests. At times, they may even surprise you with capabilities hidden under their conditions. Open your eyes and mind to discover something new at each encounter. Be present and curious. Set aside time for the intervention and cherish this special time and space shared with the person.

Respect - Introduce interventions incrementally in baby steps that work for both the person and yourself. Prepare well and set up a basic structure, but allow the person to guide you through the process. Respect the person's autonomy - their boundaries, limitations and preferences - as long as it is safe and comfortable for you both. Respect and accept the person as they are.

Considerations for Planning and Use of Therapeutic Intervention

PREPARATION

- Find out about the person's capabilities, characteristics, needs and life history. This can help guide your selection of topics and activities, and the level of support required to engage with the person.
- Set aside time (e.g. 10-30 minutes) for the intervention so you can give your full attention to the person. Find a time to interact when the person is ready, not feeling hungry, thirsty, in pain, unwell or tired.
- Try to find a quiet and safe space with adequate lighting and minimal distractions. For activities like Legos or colouring, it is ideal if you can both sit around a small table next to each other.
- Take stock of what you already have and start to experiment with items such as stuffed balls, puzzles, playing cards, building blocks, dolls, photos, magazines, pen and paper, music, a song or a topic of conversation. Avoid potentially unsafe items (e.g. items small enough to be put into the mouth, sharp and heavy objects, or marbles or small balls that may cause fall hazards). Organize props for each activity separately in a box or a Ziplock bag.
- **For safety, the props and furniture surfaces need to be thoroughly disinfected if shared among senior residents in a facility. It is suggested to provide an individualized set of activity props for each resident for infection control purposes. The person and caregiver should also wash or disinfect their hands before and after the intervention. Please consult your infection control department or your local public health office for the most up-to-date safety recommendations.
- Prepare a few activities from which the person can choose. Plan to spend around 5 to 15 minutes per activity. If you have time for several activities (e.g. 2 to 4 activities in 30 minutes), try to include different types of activities. Write down your plan and get the space and all activity props ready ahead of time.

BASIC RUNDOWN

Opening - Greet the person. Establish gentle eye contact. Introduce yourself if they don't recognize you. With a calm tone of voice and a friendly smile, invite the person to join you. Sit next to the person with their permission.

Conversation - Start with a nice conversation with the person. Listen and watch carefully for key themes, words, gestures, facial expressions and postures. Encourage the person to elaborate when needed. If the person is only able to communicate partially or nonverbally, watch for body language and facial expression. Echo the idea or feeling to show understanding and acceptance.

Activities

- Gently introduce props for the first activity. Tell the person this is what you have prepared and want to do together. Make sure the items are close enough so the person can see and participate.
- Observe and wait to see how the person responds. Is the person looking at the items? Are they reaching out to pick up a piece? How are they playing? There is NO RIGHT OR WRONG. Follow the person's rules and join in.
- If the person pays attention to the activity but hesitates to participate, you can pick up the items and play by yourself. Welcome the person to join when ready but DO NOT PRESSURE THEM.
- Be ready to answer questions from the person. Some people ask, "what is this?" "why we are doing this?" or "how do you know it works?" and like to hear you explaining why you like this game and why it is fun and good for the brain. Others may gradually open up, share personal feelings and ask for your opinion.
- Carry on with an activity only until the person is still interested, or up to 15 minutes. Be flexible and ready to terminate an activity, change to another one, or change your plan to cater to the person's energy level and mood.
- You may want to pick a calming activity to wrap up the intervention on a peaceful note.

Closing - Recognize the person's capabilities and creativity expressed in the process. Show appreciation for the person's willingness to share this precious time with you.

- Write down the duration of each activity, changes in the plan and the person's responses in the log below. Reviewing the log will help you plan the next intervention.

Activity	Duration (mins)	Participant's Response/Observation
Conversation about what she enjoys doing e.g. badminton	10	She enjoyed talking about her friends Lily and Mary. Seemed to treat me as one of her old friends and invited me to join her badminton game next time.
Playing cards	1	Said she doesn't like playing cards so I switched to the next activity.
Throwing and catching bean bags	8	Her eye-hand coordination improved after the first few minutes. She introduced variations to increase the challenge and try to "trick" me. She laughed a lot when I couldn't catch the ball.
Singing	4	Played her favourite song "Unchained Melody" on iPhone. She sang along with a cheerful voice and clapped her hands.

Therapeutic intervention focuses on how to engage a person and let the person guide us to a deep understanding and appreciation of their needs and capabilities behind responsive behaviours. It can be incorporated as part of the individualized behaviour care plan for seniors with dementia to enhance their quality of life and our care.

Baycrest

Baycrest is proud to be the Toronto region health services lead for the Behavioural Support for Seniors Program. We work with many health care providers to deliver specialized Behaviour Support Outreach services across all settings and prioritize supporting transitions.

For information about the program call **416-785-2500, ext. 2005** or toll-free at **1-844-785-2500**, you can also email us at **behaviouralsupport@baycrest.org**.



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