Caring for the Care Partner
(repeat by request!)

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Overview

• Intro to Major Neurocognitive Disorder aka What is and is not Dementia!

• Myth vs Truths

• Self Care for the Care Partner
What dementia is NOT...

• Slower thinking

• Harder to multi-task

• “Tip of the tongue”

• Thinking about the “hereafter”
...it IS a decline in one or more of:

- **Perceptual-motor function**: Visual perception, Visuoconstructive reasoning, Perceptual-motor coordination
- **Language**: Object naming, Word finding, Fluency, Grammar and syntax, Receptive language
- **Executive function**: Planning, Decision-making, Working memory, Responding to feedback, Inhibition, Flexibility
- **Learning and memory**: Free recall, Cued recall, Recognition memory, Semantic and autobiographical long-term memory, Implicit learning
- **Complex attention**: Sustained attention, Divided attention, Selective attention, Processing speed
- **Social cognition**: Recognition of emotions, Theory of mind, Insight

Dementia is an “Umbrella term”, referring to many different types of dementia.

The most common type of dementia is Alzheimer's Disease (illustrated as the handle of this umbrella).

Each of the lesser common types of dementia, such as Vascular, Lewy Body, Frontotemporal, etc, is illustrated as a separate section of the umbrella.

Diagram courtesy of: www.dementiajourney.ca
From:
http://www.ahaf.org/alzdis/about/AmyloidPlaque
From:
http://www.ahaf.org/alzdis/about/BrainAlzheimer.htm
Diagnosis of Exclusion

- Progressive change in memory or function
- Query Dementia
- Check Medication (change/reduce meds)
- Laboratory tests/exam (thyroid, B12, UTI)
- CT or MRI (tumor, CVA)
- Depressed mood (treat depression)
- Neurocognitive Disorder
Treatment of Symptoms

• Cholinesterase Inhibitors (for cognitive problems)
  – E.g., Aricept, Exelon, & Reminyl

• Antipsychotics
  – E.g., haloperidol, thioridazine

• Antidepressants

• Caring for the Caregiver
Myths vs Truths
Myth

Once you have a diagnosis of dementia you are incompetent
TRUTH

• In the early stages of dementia, most individuals retain competency (a global ability to understand and appreciate info)
Myth

Alzheimer’s is a old person’s disease
TRUTH

• People in their 30’s and 40’s can develop Alzheimer's Disease!
Myth

Dementia is preventable.
TRUTH

• Staying healthy and active (physically, mentally, and socially) reduces the risk…

• BUT there is nothing you can do to 100% prevent you from developing a type of dementia
Myth

There is no cure for Alzheimer’s Disease and other dementias
• There are medications that minimize the symptoms of the disease.

• To date, there is no cure.

• Physicians cannot reverse the impact of dementia on a person.
Myths

Life is over with a diagnosis of dementia
TRUTH

• People can choose to live as if their life is over following a diagnosis of dementia

• People can also choose to live vibrant lives with dementia

• People have written and published books AFTER their diagnosis of dementia!
Myths

People with dementia can not understand what is going on around them.
TRUTH

People with dementia may have difficulty understanding when:

• People talk quickly
• Many people talk at once
• The person is tired, or feeling unwell

BUT people with dementia can follow and understand conversations. That’s why I lead groups for them!
Life is like an airplane. You have to put your own oxygen mask on first.
“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

Dr. Naomi Rachel Remen
Telling Others…

“I'm right there in the room, and no one even acknowledges me.”
How do I tell others?

• Plan ahead for the conversation

• Only share what you want
  – I don’t want to get into details, but wanted you to know…

• Offer to talk now or later

• Be honest

• Others have the right to react whatever way they need or want to
Journaling

Don't trust your memory, jot it all down.
https://mha.easternhealth.ca/doorways/ for video/telephone counselling

- **St. John’s and surrounding areas:** 752-4903

- **Rural Avalon**
  St. Mary’s, Holyrood, Whitbourne, Placentia, Bay Roberts, Harbour Grace and Old Perlican
  Telephone: 945-6513
  Witless Bay: Telephone: 334-3941
  Ferryland and Trepassey: Telephone: 432-2930

- **Clarenville and Bonavista**
  Clarenville: Telephone: 466-5700 or 466-5723
  Bonavista: Telephone: 709-468-5318
https://mha.easternhealth.ca/doorways/ for video/telephone counselling

• **Burin Peninsula**
  Marystown: Telephone: 709-279-7900
  Grand Bank: Telephone: 832-1640 or 832-1602
  St. Lawrence: Telephone: 873-4283 or 873-2330
  Placentia West Clinic: Telephone: 709-443-2100

• **IN NOVA SCOTIA**: call [1-855-922-1122](tel:1-855-922-1122)

• Or visit [https://mha.nshealth.ca/en](https://mha.nshealth.ca/en), click on locations to find clinic closest to you and learn about what services they offer. Most provide a combo of in person, telephone and video conferencing
Sign up for free with an email address to complete modules on:

- Calming your worries – adult
- Let go and be well
- Improving your mood
- Leave your blues behind
- Pain management
- Communications & IP
- Relationships
- Substance use
Stressed or anxious?
grenfellmindfulness.com
A short web based mindfulness course to help you deal with stress or anxiety.
Summary

• Dementia is an overall term that refers to diseases which affect our thinking

• There are a number of myths out there about dementia

• By taking care of yourself and seeking help when you need to, both you and your loved one can thrive for longer!
Thank You!

Any Questions?

If you would like to be notified when we do more talks like these or be invited to participate in research, please visit our website: www.grenfell.mun.ca/arc

or email us at: arc@grenfell.mun.ca
Bonus Material!

This wasn’t shown in the presentation, but in case you wanted to see some people living well with dementia check out:

Christine Bryden: A conversation re: dementia
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sd-ZPe1w1Xk

A video on Shaping the Journey, the program I used to offer in NS with the ASNS:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9QorpSu3Tw