

Dementia Friendly Environments: Getting Started with Low Cost Solutions

Jennifer A Brush, MA, CCC/SLP, AMI Certified Trainer, Montessori for Dementia and Aging Director, Brush Development

Why do older adults benefit from a certain kind of environment?

Vision changes with age	Vision changes with dementia	Hearing changes with age
Decrease in size of pupil Pupil does not react as quickly Loss of elasticity in lens Thickening/yellowing of lens Reduced contrast & color saturation Reduced ability to discriminate blue/green from blue/violet	Problems with depth perception Spatial disorientation Difficulty judging colors Difficulty judging contrast	Presbycusis Conductive hearing loss Sensorineural hearing loss Central auditory processing disorder Tinnitus Meniere's Disease

Where do we start?

- Assess each room in the community
- Environmental and Communication Assessment Toolkit (ECAT) for Dementia Care
- Start with one area at a time

Conversation Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouped seating • Homelike items (photos, magazines, etc.) 	Bathrooms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility and accessibility • Lighting • Contrast • Placement of support bars, emergency pulls, toilet paper bar, towel bar, etc. • Supportive cues
Flooring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No contrast • Minimize patterns 	Clothes Storage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility and accessibility • Organization and display • Limited choices • Labels • Supportive cues
Bedroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalized room signage • Personalized bedroom • Orientation cues (clock/calendar/schedule) • Supportive cues 	Wall Displays/Art <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive, appropriate for adults, simplified, large font (not for staff) • Concrete images; non-glare • Help with wayfinding or provide interaction
Hallways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate lighting • Provide contrast • Control ambient noise • Include location signs, directional signs, and wayfinding cues 	

Key Design Strategies

Increase Contrast

- Healthy older eyes require 3x more contrast than young eyes
- Color contrast helps to distinguish between different types of objects
- Help elders to see better (for example: light floor, dark table, light plate or contrasting colored edge on surfaces)

Enhance Visual Organization

- Visual organization
- Contrast
- Labels
- Supportive cues

Create Memory Books

- Personally designed for every member of the community
- Help people remember important information
- Make conversation easier
- Reduce responsive behaviors (such as exit seeking and repetitive questioning)
- Provide reassurance and comfort

Provide Invitational Signage

- Invites elders to engage independently at any time

Wear Nametags

- Featuring person's preferred name
- Minimum size (3" x 1.5")
- Vibrant color with white type, sans serif font
- Worn by every member of the community (elders, staff, volunteers, visitors)
- Enhance sense of community, facilitate conversation

Dementia Friendly Environments

- ✓ Look at the environment through the elders' eyes
- ✓ Start with one room at a time
- ✓ Update paint colors
- ✓ Add wayfinding cues
- ✓ Add contrast
- ✓ Use memory books
- ✓ Wear name tags



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