Memory: Changes, Causes, & Treatment:  
Everything you wanted to know about memory but were afraid to ask

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Memory: Changes, Causes, & Treatment:

- Everyone experiences changes in memory, but what’s normal and what isn’t?
- What can cause changes in memory?
- What is the role of clergy in referral?
- How can memory changes be addressed?
- How can ministry outreach assist those with memory impairment?
Memory Problems: What is normal & what isn’t?

NORMAL AGING
• Independence in daily activities preserved
• Complains of memory loss but able to provide considerable detail regarding incidents of forgetfulness
• Patient is more concerned about alleged forgetfulness than are close family members
• Recent memory for important events, affairs, conversations not impaired

DEMENTIA
• Person becomes critically dependent on others for key independent-living activities
• May complain of memory problems only if specifically asked; Unable to recall instances where memory loss was noticed
• Close family members much more concerned about incidents of memory loss than person
• Notable decline in memory for recent events and ability to converse
Memory Problems: What is normal & what isn’t?

NORMAL AGING
- Occasional word-finding difficulties
- Does not get lost in familiar territory; may have to pause momentarily to remember way
- Able to operate common appliances even if unwilling to learn how to operate new devices
- Maintains prior level of interpersonal social skills

DEMENTIA
- Frequent word-finding pauses and substitutions
- Gets lost in familiar territory while walking or driving; may take hours to eventually return home
- Becomes unable to operate common appliances; unable to learn to operate even simple new appliances
- Exhibits loss of interest in social activities; exhibits socially inappropriate behaviors
Other behavioral and cognitive changes that may accompany memory deficits in a person with dementia:

- Difficulty performing tasks that used to come easily, such as balancing a checkbook, playing games (such as bridge), and learning new information or routines
- Losing interest in things you previously enjoyed, flat mood
- Personality changes and loss of social skills
- Changing sleep patterns, often waking up at night
- Having difficulty doing basic tasks, such as preparing meals, choosing proper clothing, or driving
Memory Problems:
What is normal & what isn’t?

Other behavioral and cognitive changes that may accompany memory deficits in a person with dementia:

• Having hallucinations, arguments, striking out, and behaving violently
• Having more difficulty reading or writing
• Using poor judgment and losing the ability to recognize danger
• Using the wrong word, not pronouncing words correctly, speaking in confusing sentences
• Withdrawing from social contact
Memory Problems: What is normal & what isn’t?

• Keep in mind that the person with memory impairment is often not able to identify they are having a problem if it is due to a neurological condition & may minimize or fail to acknowledge difficulties.

• Family members may minimize or exaggerate subtle yet progressive symptoms (such as the inability to balance the checkbook, loss of inhibition, verbal or physical abuse of/by spouse, psychosocial stressors, or other factors) – due to denial or lack of understanding.

• Different family members bring their own perception of the severity and impact of cognitive changes.
Self Administered Gerocognitive Examination - SAGE

**Free downloads are online at:**

http://medicalcenter.osu.edu/patientcare/healthcare_services/alzheimers/sage-test/Pages/index.aspx

- Available in multiple languages
- Includes scoring information for the doctor to use
What can cause changes in memory?

Proper medical evaluation is necessary because there are many things which can cause memory changes, some of which are reversible. Some examples are:

**Medications**

- Cholesterol lowering tablets such as statins
- Sleeping tablets
- Anti-histamines
- Blood pressure tablets
- Arthritis treatments
- Antidepressants
- Painkillers (such as codeine)
- Some antacids and diabetes drugs can also impair the absorption of vitamin B12 - a vital vitamin for a healthy brain.
What can cause changes in memory?

- Alcohol abuse is one of the most increasingly common causes of memory loss
- Depression
- Thyroid disease
- Vitamin B12 deficiency
- Folic Acid deficiency
- Vitamin B6 deficiency
- High Homocysteine
- Dehydration
- Diabetes:
What can cause changes in memory?

**Hypoxia (Lack of Oxygen):** caused by

- Chronic lung diseases such as COPD
- Poorly controlled asthma
- Anemia
- Snoring
- Sleep apnea

**Liver and Kidney Disease**

**Neurological Disorders:**

- Dementias
- Stroke
- Traumatic Brain Injuries
What can cause changes in memory?

**Neurological Disorders:**

- Dementias
- Stroke
- Traumatic Brain Injuries
- Huntington’s Disease
- Parkinson’s Disease
What is the role of clergy in referral?

• Encourage congregant to pursue medical evaluation
• Help provide resources which may include:

  Division of Aging Services
  12B Quakerbridge Plaza
  PO Box 715
  Mercerville, NJ 08625-0715
  800-792-9745 Toll Free

  [http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/doas/home/saaaaa.html](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/doas/home/saaaaa.html)
  (links to each county contact information)
How can memory & cognitive changes be addressed?

• Following a medical evaluation, a neuropsychological test may be performed for a person with neurological deficits.

• For degenerative cognitive conditions, the treatment interventions are focused on structuring the environment and tasks to enhance performance & ensure safety.

• For non-degenerative cognitive conditions, the focus is on skill rebuilding & use of compensatory strategies.
How can memory & cognitive changes be addressed?

**Internal Strategies**
- Rehearse and repeat information
- Use verbal strategies (association strategies, rhyming, chunking, PQRST, story-telling)
- Use visual strategies (visualization, loci)
- Retrace steps if an item is misplaced

**External Strategies**
- Storage devices: written checklists, day timers, recorders, medicine cases, etc.
- Cueing devices: pagers, alarm watches, cell phones, use of a timer
- Restructuring environments: organize and label items, keep things in a set place, place items in key locations
- Make charts or diagrams to recall concepts
Keys to Optimizing Cognitive Function

- Adequate sleep
- Good nutrition
- Proper amount of stimulation
- Exercise (especially aerobic)
- Stress Management
- Use cognitive strategies
How can memory & cognitive changes be addressed?

• Invite those with impairments to sit closer to the front to assist them in maintaining focus on the speaker

• Pair the congregant with another church member who can serve to facilitate them during the service

• Provide a paper bulletin, with a clear outline of the service, written in larger print, perhaps also with scriptures, some prayers and even anthem lyrics printed out

• If possible, have a power point slide show available to coincide with the service; including the words for the hymns, pictures & symbols, pictures of church events
How can memory & cognitive changes be addressed?

• Avoid changes in the order of the service when possible - it can confuse the memory-impaired congregant

• If possible, offer a smaller, more intimate mass for those with cognitive impairment. They can get more confused when in a larger group

Refer to handout for Multi-Sensory Worship Ideas:
• http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/projects/documents/MultisensoryWorshipIdeas.pdf

• Create a large calendar summarizing church social events and containing pictures of recent events in your fellowship hall
How can memory & cognitive changes be addressed?

_Hymn Karaoke_

- Many clips available on You Tube
  - Example: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”
    http://youtu.be/BBs1lh8R24
- Free Online Resources: Such as

www.freemake.com/blog/download-karaoke-songs-free/
How can memory changes be addressed?

For Bible study:
- use a bible familiar to the congregant (their own personal bible) when possible
- if there are impairments affecting reading - consider audio bible formats
- if tech savvy, there are many bible programs available for things like Kindle & iPads
  • Bible Videos (iPad, iPhone: free)
  • KJV Bible Audiobook (iPad, iPhone: free)
  • Daily Bible (iPad, iPhone: free)
How can ministry outreach assist those with memory impairment?

**Home and community:**

- Provide check in and reminder calls
- Help impaired congregants set up reminder systems for the week
- Schedule home visits to check in on "at risk" members.
- Assist the individual in accessing needed resources through local Office on Aging
- Help create scrapbooks containing pictures and brief summaries of recent events
Sources

- http://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/HB_web/is-it-forgetfulness-or-dementia.htm
- http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/seo/basics/causes/CON-20034399
- http://medicalcenter.osu.edu/patientcare/healthcare_services/alzheimer/sage-test/Pages/index.aspx
- http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/projects/faith_based.html
Questions?

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