



Conversations of Dementia

Real Stories of the Journey



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Unlocking Silent Voices: The Expansive Role of Speech Therapy in Dementia Care

Speech therapy addresses articulation, voice, language, and swallowing disorders arising from various conditions, such as developmental delays, strokes, brain injuries, or cognitive conditions. Beyond the conventional scope of Therapy, it profoundly impacts cognition, social interaction, and overall quality of life.

In dementia care, decoding communication complexities becomes an intricate puzzle. Jennie Jennings, a seasoned speech therapist at Legacy Healthcare Services, unveils the nuances of speech therapy in dementia care. Her unique approach goes beyond traditional boundaries, offering profound insights into the impact of treatment on individuals facing dementia challenges.

Bridging Communication Gaps: Tailoring Therapies to Unique Needs

Collaboration is central to Jennie's approach as a speech therapist at Legacy Healthcare Services. Understanding residents' communication and cognitive levels is a top priority for her. She categorizes them into mild, moderate, or severe cognitive stages, but her method goes beyond exploring personal preferences, hobbies, and interests to establish profound connections. Using the example of Sharon's special Mother's Day Tea Party, inspired by cherished photos with her granddaughter, Jennie involved Sharon in the planning process. Involving Sharon resulted in an immersive experience that resonated with Sharon's past, supporting her communication and fostering comfort. The lasting impression from this event became a fond memory for Sharon months later. Jennie believes that uncovering these meaningful connections empowers individuals to thrive in their unique environments.



When working with residents at lower cognitive levels, Jennie employs an approach similar to the Montessori method. The process involves identifying activities that trigger muscle or motor memory, such as holding a baby, tending a garden, painting, or baking. Close collaboration with memory care staff ensures these engagements suit the residents' capabilities. Residents at higher cognitive levels actively participate in activities like baking sessions, while those at lower levels assist in tasks such as frosting cookies. The overarching goal for Jennie is precision—meeting each individual precisely where they are in their journey.

Staging Tools for Tailored Communication

Jennie seamlessly incorporates staging concepts into her unique approach to crafting personalized communication strategies for residents. This tailored method precisely aligns support with each resident's cognitive stage, utilizing cues, visuals, and verbal aids tailored to their needs. By exploring their cognitive levels, she curates personalized approaches that optimize communication uniquely for each person.

Jennie says, "Staging tools such as the Global Deterioration Scale (GDS) and Allen Cognitive levels are integral to developing communication strategies. Understanding a resident's level helps me tailor communication strategies to their needs. For instance, identifying whether they require one-step commands or rely on visual, verbal, or tactile cues guides our approach to effective communication. In each level, encompassing a wide spectrum from low to high, teamwork is crucial to precisely assess and identify each resident's current stage. The more I understand their stage, the more apparent changes or improvements become over time. Strategies vary for each individual; someone with mild deficits benefits from visual support, while someone with more moderate deficits requires verbal and tactile cues for improved responses. This understanding enables me to adapt and effectively cater to their communication needs, ensuring they express themselves optimally."



Speech Therapy in Dementia: Pioneering a Unique Approach

Within the intricate realm of dementia care, conventional speech therapy typically centers on articulation or voice specialization. However, the role of a speech therapist at Legacy Healthcare Services takes a distinctive departure from these norms. Instead of exclusively concentrating on traditional aspects, this approach strengthens functional cognition and communication, surpassing conventional parameters like swallowing or voice clarity. This customized methodology seeks to empower caregivers and families while addressing the unique needs of individuals grappling with dementia.

Addressing Common Misconceptions and Guiding Families

Jennie emphasizes the presence of misconceptions surrounding speech therapy, underscoring that it encompasses more than just swallowing and speech issues. The most prevalent misconception arises when people believe their speech is acceptable merely because they articulate clearly. With this misconception, Jennie then explores deeper into memory, word recall, expression, comprehension, and even higher-level functions like planning and organizing. For instance, she assists someone in structuring their day when they feel disoriented. It's about identifying their interests and demonstrating how these elements intertwine with speech therapy, ultimately contributing to an improved quality of life. The approach here is distinctive, geared towards enhancing functional abilities and fostering social engagement.

Aiding Transition and Cultivating Trust

Transitioning to a new environment can pose challenges, particularly for individuals with cognitive impairment. Jennie's approach strongly emphasizes personalized support, seamlessly integrating residents' interests into daily activities and creating a comforting atmosphere. Building trust is a gradual process, underscoring the significance of comprehending each family's unique perceptions.



Moving to a new place signifies a notable change, especially for those transitioning from their home or being with family. Past therapy experiences that didn't quite meet expectations are not uncommon, making the focus on independence and tailored support distinctive. Whether the therapist with Legacy Healthcare Services meets residents in their rooms or partakes in activities like the walking club or coffee sessions, the objective is to make the experience enjoyable. Understanding patients' interests assists in aiding their settlement and creating a sense of home within a new community. Even minor environmental adjustments contribute to easing their transition. Physical Therapy ensures safety, and Jennie focuses on enhancing communication and participation in daily activities. The aim is to aid the adjustment and genuinely establish the new memory care community as a place that's their home. Gradual acclimation and continuous support are crucial until they feel at ease. Building trust requires time, and our team excels in working with initially hesitant families. Initiatives like creating memory books and forming personal connections can yield positive responses. Acknowledging each family's unique experiences and perceptions contributes to our commitment to providing a supportive and unparalleled environment.

Unlocking Silent Conversations: Breakthroughs in Non-Vocal Communication

Experiencing those "aha" moments with non-vocal residents is magical. Through subtle gestures, tactile responses, or a simple nod, these instances signify a profound expression, even when words might elude us. Jennie sheds light on the significance of these moments, emphasizing the power of positive reinforcement and calming mechanisms, such as familiar songs or objects, to enhance communication effectiveness.

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Addressing these challenges requires a multi-modal communication approach, acknowledging both the inability to vocalize and the complexities of memory concerns. Navigating the formidable task of decoding nonverbal expressions involves techniques such as utilizing gestures, head nods, pointing and simplifying speech in order to ensure the resident's needs and wants are met. Jennie emphasizes the role of modeling these strategies for caregivers, empowering them to connect effectively with those in their care.

The dynamic nature of this process involves adapting strategies based on evolving needs. What works initially may transform over time, necessitating a keen understanding of routines, preferences, and changes. Collaborating closely with families to uncover past habits aids in tailoring communication strategies, whether through simplifying choices, using visuals, or adjusting to evolving needs. The ultimate goal is to provide personalized support that respects the unique communication styles of each individual.

Conclusion

In a realm where silence can be easily misinterpreted among the dementia population, Jennie's work holds deep significance. Grasping the importance of individuality is both challenging and pivotal in aiding individuals to rediscover and articulate themselves. Jennie's insights into the expansive role of speech therapy in dementia care reveal the intricate layers of communication often overlooked. Through her patient-centered approach and unwavering commitment, she unravels silent voices, providing comfort, understanding, and a profound sense of connection to those navigating the complexities of dementia. Jennie's contribution to speech therapy is commendable, evident in its positive impact on memory care patients / residents. Thank you, Jennie, and your entire team, for your unwavering dedication!



Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE): Understanding, Preventing, and Managing

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) is a degenerative brain condition believed to stem from repeated head injuries or concussions, especially in contact sports like American football, boxing, and ice hockey, where athletes often endure frequent blows to the head. However, CTE can result from various causes, not just from contact sports, including repetitive falls, blows or strikes to the head, abusive situations, childhood or vehicle accidents that result in concussion, or even military combat from explosives.

Understanding CTE:

CTE has garnered attention due to its association with the long-term consequences of repetitive head trauma, particularly in professional athletes. It is characterized by the accumulation of an abnormal protein called tau in the brain, forming tangles that disrupt normal brain function. Currently, there are no definitive diagnoses for CTE, and determination typically occurs postmortem. However, researchers are actively working on testing methods, including spinal fluid analysis, which reveals elevated levels of tau proteins.

Symptoms of CTE do not immediately manifest after a head injury; it could take years or even decades for them to appear. There seems to be a spectrum of symptoms presenting in two forms. The first form occurs in a person's early life (20s and 30s), causing motor dysfunction, mental and behavioral issues, and heightened sensitivity to alcohol. These symptoms include mood swings, impulsive explosivity, impaired judgment, irritability, aggression, hopelessness, depression, sleep issues, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts. The second form manifests later in life, around the age of sixty, with symptoms presenting as cognitive concerns, including memory impairment, dementia, Parkinsonism, ataxia (lack of voluntary coordination of muscle movements), or dysarthria (slurred speech).

Preventing and Managing CTE:

Preventing CTE involves minimizing the risk of head injuries, especially those resulting in concussions. Tips for risk reduction and management include:

1. **Protective Equipment:** Properly use and maintain protective gear, such as helmets, in activities where head injuries are common.
2. **Safety Guidelines:** Adhere to safety rules and guidelines in sports and recreational activities, including proper techniques to minimize the risk of head injuries.
3. **Education:** Increase awareness about the signs and symptoms of concussions among athletes, coaches, and parents.
4. **Regular Health Check-ups:** Monitor the health of individuals engaged in high-risk activities to ensure quick identification and management of concussions.
5. **Rest and Recovery:** Allow sufficient rest and recovery after a head injury, avoiding a premature return to play or everyday activities.
6. **Limiting Exposure:** Consider limiting participation in high-impact or contact sports for those at a higher risk of head injuries.
7. **Safe Practices:** Encourage and enforce safe practices in various settings to minimize accidents leading to head injuries.
8. **Research and Development:** Support ongoing research into CTE, concussions, and brain injuries to enhance prevention and treatment strategies.

For managing CTE, there is currently no known cure. The focus should be on finding an expert that can scan the brain, find the root cause, and provide healing, along with symptomatic treatments, supportive care, promoting a healthy lifestyle, and minimizing the risk of additional head injuries.

Individuals concerned about CTE should consult healthcare professionals, particularly those with expertise in neurology or sports medicine. Dr. Daniel Amen of the Amen Clinics is notable in this regard, having experience with such conditions. He provided consultation on the movie "Concussion" and has collaborated with athletes at risk of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and CTE.


Join us at the 4th Annual Gala for Brain Health Awareness June 8, 2024!



The Night of Hope

Bringing Hope to Alzheimer's by Focusing on Brain Health Education, Prevention, Early Detection, and the Potential of Reversal.



Elevate your evening at the **4th Annual Gala for Brain Health Awareness** - an event that transcends ordinary gatherings! 



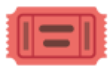
Brace yourself for a night of sensational performances as country sensation Jay Allen takes center stage, setting the tone for an unforgettable journey into the heart of purpose and inspiration! Jay Allen has named his first tour, the Night of Hope, in honor of our charity – WOW!



This gala is not just an event; it's a movement! Your presence or sponsorship is a vital chord in the global symphony of raising awareness for Alzheimer's and Brain Health. Join us as we harmonize efforts and make waves that resonate across the world.



VIP SPONSORS - Get ready for an exclusive cocktail evening with Jay Allen! Connect with the artist in an intimate setting and become part of an evening where every note is a step closer to a healthier, more aware world.



Secure your tickets now and reserve your spot at the Gala for Brain Health Awareness - an evening brimming with purpose, inspiration, and unwavering support. Let's unite to make a difference!

[Get your tickets now and secure your spot at the Gala](#)

♥♥ Be part of something extraordinary - The Night of Hope Gala 2024! #NightOfHope2024 #BrainHealthAwareness ♥♥

About Chasity Robinson Mwangi and Mindful Connection

Chasity Robinson Mwangi is an experienced healthcare professional with over 25 years of expertise. She founded Mindful Connection, an organization that offers coaching, training, speaking engagements, and educational resources to families, businesses, and healthcare organizations. One of Mindful Connection's significant initiatives is "Conversations of Dementia," which aims to raise awareness and understanding of this challenging condition and provide practical support to those who need it most.

Chasity's unwavering dedication to caring for humanity and seniors is the driving force behind her work. Currently, she serves as the Senior Community Relations Director and Corporate Sales Trainer for Anthem Memory Care. To inquire about memory support communities, please contact Chasity via email at Crmwangi@anthemmemorycare.com or by phone at 913-901-8500. For general inquiries, consultations, coaching, training, presentations, or any other questions, please contact MindfulConnectionUs@gmail.com. You can also connect with Chasity on [LinkedIn](#) or follow [Mindful Connection](#) on Facebook or [Instagram](#) for more information.

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Figures:

1. Figure 1. "Jennie Jennings." Source: Photo provided by Jennie Jennings.
2. Figure 2-5. "Therapy patients / Memory Care residents." Source: Provided by Morningside Place Memory Care.
3. Figure 6. Youth Football Players. Source: www.publicdomainpictures.net/en/view-image.php?image=100999&&picture=youth-football

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