

The 7 A's of Dementia

5. Apraxia: Loss of Purposeful Movement



Deficits:

- An inability to execute or carry out learned purposeful movements, despite having the desire and the physical ability to perform the movements.
- It results from impaired motor planning and sequencing processes
- An inability to plan, sequence and execute the steps of particular tasks.
- An impairment in the ability to attend to or focus on a task

Associated Behaviours:

- The tendency to shift from one task to another, especially when distracted
- Dress apraxia: an inability to sequence the layering of clothing or a lack of coordination for putting on an article of clothing
- Difficulty with push-button items, remote controls, microwaves, touch-tone phones
- Experiencing frustration or anger if tasks are too difficult, unfamiliar, or have multiple steps and demands that may exceed capabilities
- Apparent “refusal” to participate in care by saying “no” to a suggested task or activity, despite the fact that they may appear physically able. It may not mean he or she does not want to do it, but rather that the person does not remember how

Effective Care Strategies for Apraxia:

- Explain to care providers the impact that apraxia may have on the observed behaviours
- Set out clothes in the correct order, from top to bottom, to facilitate independent dressing
- Provide step-by-step instructions while allowing the person to proceed independently with each step, thereby preserving privacy and dignity
- Minimize distractions that compete for attention
- Whenever feasible, provide visual cueing by dressing at the same time as the person with dementia (e.g. a spousal care provider setting out clothes in the morning or a staff member demonstrating putting on a coat to go outside)