

# Cognitive Abilities



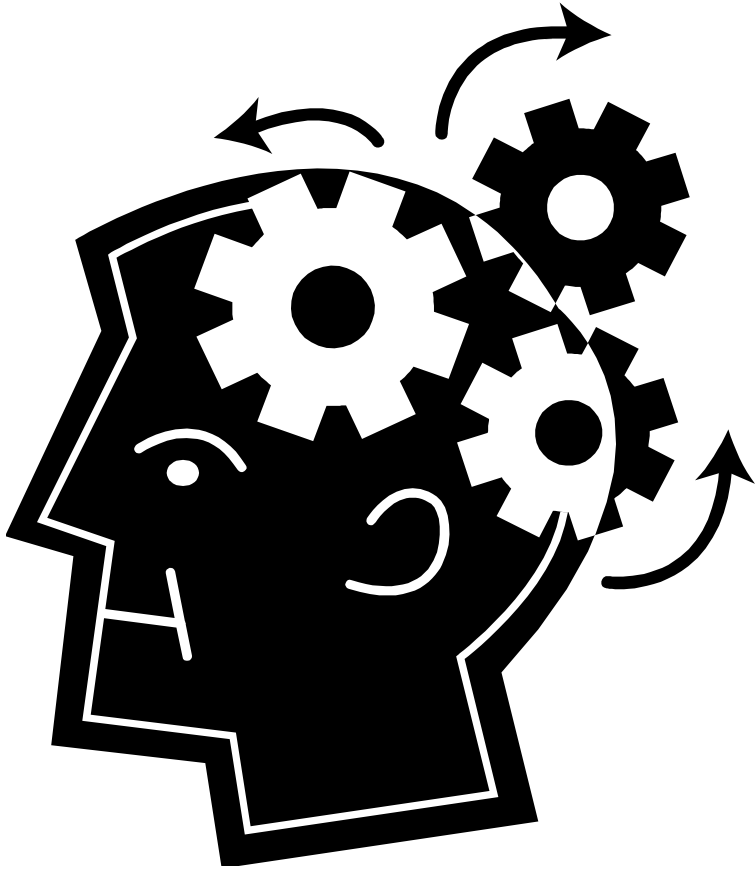
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**Cognitive Abilities  
and  
Intervention Strategies  
(CAIS)  
Educational Series  
Session 2**

**On Improving MI Practices  
website at**

**<https://www.improvingmipractices.org>**

# Today's Topic



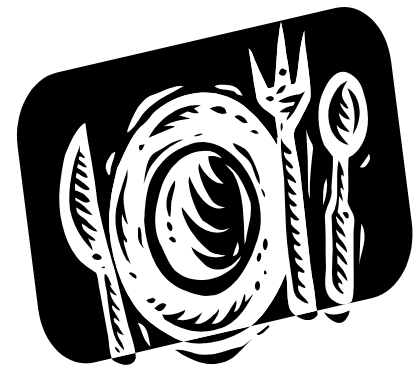
- Today, we'll talk about cognitive abilities, or a person's **ability to think**
- We'll ask some **questions** to help us understand why a person does some tasks more easily than others or feels a certain way
- These questions are based on **brain** functioning, but you don't need to know anything about the brain to ask them

# Cognitive Abilities Questions

- These questions can help you understand a person's **cognitive strengths and needs**
  - While you are helping a person with a task or communicating with them
  - When you want to improve communication or a task
- **Anyone** can ask these questions
- They can generate **strategies** (interventions) to support a person's cognitive abilities to:
  - Help with any task and communicate
  - Help everyone feel better, prevent and reduce distress and distressing situations

# Ideas of Intervention Strategies

- These strategies change the **environment**, your **communication**, or the **task** to adapt to or compensate for cognitive changes
- These intervention ideas are useful in **all** tasks, such as making decisions, playing a game, dressing, eating, using the toilet, and bathing



# 5 Phases of Cognitive Processing

1. **Sensory Phase:** Can this person **receive information** from the environment through their five senses?
2. **Comprehension/ Perception Phase:** Can this person's brain **recognize and understand** the information received from the senses?



# 5 Phases (continued)

3. **Executive Phase:** Can this person organize and **use the information** to decide on a response?
4. **Expressive Phase:** Can this person's **brain tell their body** what to do in order to respond?
5. **Motor Phase:** Can this person's **body** physically **respond** to the instructions from their brain?

# 5 Phases Illustration

- **Sensory** phase - Can this person **see** the object (such as a washcloth) and **hear** the instructions?
- **Comprehension/ perception** phase – Can this person **recognize** the objects and **know what the words mean**?
- **Executive phase** – Can this person use cognitive abilities like **memory** and **logic**?

# 5 Phases Illustration (continued)

- **Expressive** phase – Can this person's brain tell them **how** to take the object, and **how to coordinate all the body parts** to make the movements in the task?
- **Motor** phase – Can this person's **body respond** to their brain's instructions? Arthritis, muscle weakness or pain can make this very difficult



# Sensory Phase

## Explanations

- Most older people have **sensory loss** due to **normal aging**
- Healthy older people can **compensate** for this loss by using other clues to **figure out** what they are hearing and seeing
- If the **part of their brain that compensates** for sensory loss is **not working well**, senses are crucial

# Sensory Examples

- Ms. Smith may have difficulty seeing how **deep the water** is in the bathtub, if a shiny floor is wet, or if a dark spot on the floor is a hole or something to step over
- Ms. Smith may not be able to easily **hear** words with **high** pitched consonants, such as “shower”, “meal”, “bathroom”, “dressed”





# Sensory/Perceptual Examples

- Ms. Smith's ability to **feel** through her skin may be affected. A **soft touch** may feel like **being hit** or the shower spray like **needles** digging into her skin
- The feel of the **temperature** of a room or of water may **change** minute by minute or feel **colder or warmer** than you feel it

# Comprehension/Perception Examples

- Ms. Smith may read notes and signs well, but may not **understand** what she is reading
- Ms. Smith may respond more quickly when approached **from the front** or from one side versus the other
- Objects may be **closer or farther away** than Ms. Smith realizes
- The environment will likely **look or feel different** to Ms. Smith than it does to you

# Executive Phase

## Explanations

- Executive functions are the **most complex** abilities and are usually the **most difficult** of all cognitive phases
- **Shifting from one activity to another** can be difficult so you need to allow enough **time for “shifting gears”**

# Executive Phase

## Explanations (continued)



- **Misjudging** the amount of **time** that has passed is common
- Often, a person with cognitive needs does **not know** when they make a **mistake**. It is better to discreetly assist rather than call attention to their mistake



# Expressive Phase



## Examples

- “**Word finding difficulty**” is common
- Using **song or rhythm** when talking, walking, or performing a task can be helpful
- Ms. Smith may be able to do a task more easily if she **doesn't think about it. Distraction** can be useful

# Motor Phase

## Explanations

- **Pain:** a **very common** cause of distress and of behavior that causes distress
- Many people don't **exercise** enough and may have difficulty **moving body parts**
- **Distances** may be too far for a person to easily walk, so they become **tired** and confused before being asked to perform a task

# Assessing the Whole Person Physical, Emotional, & Cognitive

- Understanding a person's **medical** and **emotional** status is extremely important
- Why? Because it will give us ideas of what to say and how to touch a person who may be experiencing **pain**
- It will also allow us to have **realistic expectations**

# Understanding this Person's History



- How did Ms. Smith **cope** with stress, trauma or tragedy in her past? (Pacing? Shouting? Going for a walk?)
- What were Ms. Smith's life-long **goals** or **self image**? (Independent? Modest? Productive?)