

The Communication Intervention Strategies

I. RESPECT

Shelly E. Weaverdyck, Ph.D.

Look for ways I can:

- Show respect for this person, both verbally and nonverbally
- Treat this person as an adult, both verbally and nonverbally
- Express warmth and gentle friendliness to this person (show that I care about this person), both verbally and nonverbally

A. Do I respect this person? (For example, do I see this person as a valued person? Do I understand this person enough to admire them? Am I free of feelings of impatience, irritation, embarrassment, or disgust?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Think of this person as an adult worthy of your respect.
2. Remind yourself you are with this person to meet their needs. They have a right to make as many decisions and choices as possible.
3. Imagine this person as someone you admire, care about, or respect, such as your parent or grandparent, or another family member or friend.
4. Get to know this person's culture, preferences, habits, history, and accomplishments.
5. Recognize their current physical and medical status and possible pain concerns.
6. Take this person's feelings and behavior seriously and respond with kindness and calm patience, especially when this person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, certain people, or words they hear. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma.
7. Don't take their comments or actions personally, when your feelings are hurt. Their cognitive needs are likely the reason for their comments and actions. Try to be objective and to take a problem-solving approach.
8. Treat this person with dignity, regardless of how they look or act.
9. Address this person's feelings with respect and kindness even when you are acting to stop a behavior.
10. Talk with others about your feelings about this person, if necessary, to help you find ways to address your feelings and to create positive feelings.
11. Arrange for someone else to assist this person until you do respect them.

B. Do I treat this person as an adult in both my words and facial expressions? (For example do I avoid calling this person "dear" when I don't really know them?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Avoid thinking of dependency as childlike. Remind yourself that brain changes do not make this person childlike, rather they present very specific cognitive challenges. This person still retains much of the information and skills they have acquired over a lifetime.
2. Use this person's name frequently and use the name they prefer.

EXAMPLES for #B.2:

- *This person's first name and/or Mr./Mrs./Ms.*
3. Express friendliness and warmth in adult terms appropriate for their culture and preference.

EXAMPLES for #B.3:

- *Ms. Joyce, or Miss Joyce, or Sir Bob, or Ma'am.*
4. Use eye contact as appropriate for their culture and preference.
 5. Be aware of your own facial expressions.
 6. Keep a pleasant, reassuring and kind facial expression. Avoid frowns, tightened lips, clenched teeth, and facial expressions of irritation, disgust, or scolding.

C. Do I offer normal adult objects and activities? (For example, do I avoid children's toys or children's games or objects that look cartoonish or look like they are for children?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Avoid thinking of "simplifying" as "making childlike".
2. Try to make an adult activity simpler rather than offering children's activities.
3. Play simplified versions of adult games rather than children's games.

EXAMPLES for #C.3:

- *Play a simplified version of Bridge, rather than Go Fish.*

4. Encourage adult activities.

EXAMPLES for #C.4:

- *Use colored pencils or markers to color adult drawings, rather than crayons to color in children's coloring books.*
- *Use real instruments when singing and playing in a group, instead of homemade rhythm instruments.*

5. Use actual objects rather than toy facsimiles.

EXAMPLES for #C.5:

- *Use a real screw driver or a normal deck of playing cards.*

6. If a doll or stuffed animal is one of the few things that is calming and comforting to this person or engages this person because it feels to this person like they are holding a baby or pet cat, then offer a doll that looks like a real baby or a stuffed animal that looks like a real cat.

D. Do I avoid talking about this person in a condescending way? (For example, do I avoid saying, "They are so cute together," or "She's the little lady over there"?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Treat this person with dignity, regardless of how they look or act.
2. Remind yourself this person has adult feelings and thoughts.
3. Speak about this person as you would want people to speak about you or about someone you admire, care about, and respect.
4. Avoid talking about this person to others unless talking about this person would be helpful to this person.
5. When talking to others about this person, talk about them in a way that respects this person and their privacy and emphasizes their strengths. Avoid telling others information that would be embarrassing or demeaning.
6. Remind yourself this person's dependency does not give you permission to feel superior.

E. Do I avoid talking about this person in front of this person?

STRATEGIES:

1. Use private spaces to discuss this person with others. Remind yourself there are many subtle ways in which this person may sense someone is talking about them. That may feel demeaning and embarrassing.
2. Even with severe cognitive needs, this person may be able to hear and sometimes understand what is being said. They may also recognize the body language or attitude being expressed. It is safer to assume this person hears and understands everything you are saying to others, and to adjust accordingly.
3. Include this person in conversations about them as much as possible.
4. Avoid embarrassing this person when talking about their condition, behavior, or bodily functions, etc.

F. Are my voice, gestures, and movements gentle and kind, even when clear and firm?

STRATEGIES:

1. Listen to yourself talk. Imagine how you sound to this person. Concentrate on keeping your voice calm, smooth, and gentle, even when joking or being silly.
2. Avoid moving quickly. When rapid movement is necessary, concentrate on keeping the movement gentle.
3. All touch conveys feelings. Keep touch kind and reassuring, even when the situation is extreme and requires physically putting yourself between this person and another person or object to prevent someone from getting hurt.
4. Respond with kindness and calm patience to this person's feelings and behavior, especially when this

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, certain people, or words they hear. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma.

G. Do I help this person save face and avoid embarrassment? (For example, do I avoid calling attention to their mistakes? Do I discreetly correct their mistakes without them noticing?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Imagine yourself or someone you admire, care about, and respect in this situation.
2. Think of ways you can help this person feel good about themselves and this situation.
3. Try to prevent this person from noticing their mistakes, so their energy is preserved for performing the task or interaction.
4. Avoid requiring their brain to do unnecessary work (such as correcting mistakes and addressing feelings at the same time).
5. Note this person's mistakes in behavior and words and correct them without this person or others noticing the corrections.
6. Avoid talking about this person to others unless talking about this person would be helpful to this person.
7. When talking to others about this person, talk about them in a way that respects this person and their privacy and emphasizes their strengths. Avoid telling others information that would be embarrassing or demeaning.

H. Do I avoid scolding, shaming, or bossing this person?

STRATEGIES:

1. Avoid the temptation to "make this person behave". This is especially important in challenging situations. Trying to "make this person behave" may make the situation more difficult to resolve.
2. Remind yourself this person's ability to control their behavior and words is reduced. Address their feelings of anxiety, confusion, and anger.
3. Respond with kindness and calm patience to this person's feelings and behavior, especially when this person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, certain people, or words they hear. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma.
4. Keep your voice, facial expressions, and body movements calm, gentle, kind, and reassuring.
5. Address the distress. That is, focus more on this person's feelings of distress than on their behavior or words.
6. Remind yourself you are here to help this person feel better, not simply to protect them and other people in the situation.
7. Avoid taking this person's behavior and words personally. When that is difficult to do, seek appropriate ways to express your own frustration, hurt, and anger away from this person.

The Communication Intervention Strategies

II. EXPLANATION AND REASSURANCE

Shelly E. Weaverdyck, Ph.D.

Look for ways I can:

- Show reassurance to this person
- Clearly explain events, requests, and the environment to this person

A. Do I give verbal reassurance as often as necessary?

STRATEGIES:

1. Listen to what you say.
2. Use words as often as this person needs them, even if it means repeating yourself.
3. Use words and phrases like “It’s OK.” or “We’ll do it together.” or “That’s good.” or “You’re doing that very well.” or “They know you’re here.”
4. Respond with words of kindness and calm patience to this person’s feelings and behavior, especially when this person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, certain people, or words they hear. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma.

B. Do I give nonverbal reassurance as often as necessary?

STRATEGIES:

1. Be alert to your body movements and position.
2. Listen to how you sound (whether you are saying words or simply making sounds).
3. Remind yourself that this person may respond more to how you appear than to how you sound, and more to how you sound than to the words you say.
4. Use your face, gestures and body stance to communicate reassurance and calm.
5. Let your body say that everything is okay or that you will take care of a problem, whether or not this person can understand words.
6. Speak slowly and lower the pitch of your voice to keep the sound of your voice calm and reassuring.
7. Respond with kindness and calm patience to this person’s feelings and behavior, especially when this person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, certain people, or words they hear. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma.
8. Use touch to reassure this person if they are comfortable with touch at this moment.
 - Use touch frequently especially if this person has sensory loss in vision and hearing to reassure, comfort, communicate, inform, offer companionship, and orient, but only if they are comfortable with your touch at this time.
 - Before touching, remind yourself that this person may be particularly sensitive to touch.
 - This person may feel emotionally distressed with touch, especially if they are currently experiencing or have experienced in the past sexual, physical, or emotional trauma, pain, or discomfort.
 - This person may feel mild or severe physical pain or discomfort when touched.
 - Your touch might send sensations such as “pins and needles”, “bugs crawling”, or “tickling” up and down this person’s skin. A soft touch might feel like a hit, or like intense heat or cold.
 - Your touch might also create pain or discomfort in another part of their body that wasn’t touched. For example, this person might feel abdominal discomfort when you touch their arm or their arm touches a table in front of them.
 - Ask permission or gently tell this person before touching them.
 - Watch this person’s face and body and listen to what they say and the sounds they make to recognize evidence of their level of sensitivity or discomfort with touch at this moment.
 - When touching, minimize the number of times your hand leaves and returns to their body, since

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

their body may have difficulty adjusting to the initiation of touch.

- Use the palm of your hand rather than individual fingers when touching to minimize the number of contact points between your hand and their body.
- Use a gentle but firm pressure when touching, when light touch seems to be particularly uncomfortable. Avoid applying so much pressure that your touch hurts this person.
- See additional strategies and more detail about touch and pain in the CAIS Cognitive Strategies Sensory J and K sections and Motor G and H sections, and the CAIS Communication Strategies Body Language I section.

C. Do I avoid giving this person information that would be distressing or embarrassing to them?

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that your goal at all times is to help this person feel good.
2. Avoid situations or comments that might embarrass or distress this person.

EXAMPLES for #C.2:

- *Avoid discussing this person's incontinence when other people are nearby.*
3. When this person must be told upsetting news, tell them only as much information as they need.
 4. Deliver any upsetting information compassionately, beginning with positive statements and warm reassurance of your care, concern, and support.
 5. Avoid pointing out this person's mistakes. Instead, discreetly adjust a situation to "fix" the mistake without them knowing the mistake was made.
 6. Avoid shaming this person into proper behavior .

EXAMPLES for #C.6:

- *Avoid saying "What would your mother say if she heard you talk that way?"*
7. Focus on this person's feelings rather than their behavior. Avoid bringing the behavior to this person's attention. Reassure them that "It's OK." rather than "Stop doing that."
 8. Give this person only truthful information.
 9. Give this person only as much information as they need to feel comfortable and satisfied. Excess information may be confusing and distressing to this person.
 10. Adapt the amount and nature of information you give to this person's needs and desires, cognitive abilities, and the circumstances.

EXAMPLES for #C.10:

- *When this person asks, "Where is my husband?" avoid saying their deceased husband is dead unless you are sure they won't be surprised and grieve. You might say, "Your family knows you are here." or "Your husband is not here right now." or "Tell me about your husband." or "Your husband is a good man."*

D. Do I give information or make a request only when this person is emotionally calm and ready to hear me? (So they do not need to feel emotion and think about my words at the same time?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Wait until this person is calm and focused on you and your words, before giving them information or asking them to say or do something.
2. Avoid requiring this person to think about your words at the same time they are feeling emotion.
3. Before you speak, watch this person's eyes to know they see and recognize you, and are paying attention to you.
4. Use calming, reassuring words rather than a request to stop, even when this person is doing something that needs to be stopped immediately. Shouting to stop or speaking quickly may upset this person and reduce their ability to understand what they need to stop doing or how to stop. After reassuring words, calmly divert them away from actions that need to be stopped.

E. Do I give as much explanation as this person needs?

STRATEGIES:

1. Give as much explanation as is necessary for this person to feel comfortable.

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

2. Clarify frequently to avoid confusion.
3. Explain to this person what is happening in the surrounding environment, in your interactions with them, and during the task they are performing.
4. Remind yourself that their ability to figure out why something is happening, why someone is saying something, or what they need to do next may be reduced.

F. Do I repeat requests or explanations as often as necessary?

STRATEGIES:

1. Repeat requests or explanations as often as necessary, since this person may easily and frequently forget what you say.
2. Remind yourself that although this repetition can be frustrating for you, this person's reduced ability to remember may fluctuate and be unpredictable and is most likely due to changes in this person's brain. It is rarely due to this person's desire, intention, or to manipulation. Comments such as "She can remember what she wants to." or "He can remember when he wants to." are usually false and a misinterpretation of this person's abilities or desires. Be compassionate, patient, and tolerant.
3. If this person understood you the first time but forgot what you said, then repeat the request or explanation in exactly the same words used the first time, since changing them might be confusing or tiring.
4. Watch and listen carefully to this person to see if another repetition would be helpful.
5. If this person doesn't understand you the first time, then give the same request or explanation using different words that may be more meaningful to them, or by speaking more slowly and clearly.
6. Watch and listen carefully to this person to see if they understood what you said.
7. Watch and listen carefully to this person to see if they realize your comments apply to them.

G. Are my explanations short, simple, and clear?

STRATEGIES:

1. Use short and simple sentences. Avoid elaborate, multi-phrase explanations.

EXAMPLES for #G.1:

- *"It's ok. They are testing the alarms."*
2. Watch this person to see if your explanation is clear and satisfying. If this person is relaxed and not distressed, then slowly give more explanation until they have heard enough.

H. Do I use few words and short phrases and words?

STRATEGIES:

1. Use as few words as possible to get the point across. Try to talk less and smile more.
2. Watch this person to see if it would help to use more or fewer words.
3. Listen to your own words.
4. Choose your words carefully.
5. Use only adult words.

I. Do I use familiar words?

STRATEGIES:

1. Use words that are meaningful to this person.
2. Use words that this person uses now or used in the past.

EXAMPLES for #I.2:

- *Use "couch" instead of "sofa"; or "urinate" instead of "pee".*

J. Do I use concrete words? (For example, do I say "I will help you put your shirt on." rather than "I will help you get dressed.")

STRATEGIES:

1. Use words that are meaningful to this person.
2. Use words that are not too abstract.

EXAMPLES for #J.2:

- *"Do you want to wear the red dress?" rather than "Do you want to wear the fancy dress?" or "Do you need to go to the toilet" rather than "Do you need to use the*

restroom?”.

K. Do I speak clearly?

STRATEGIES:

1. Enunciate clearly but normally (that is, with a normal rhythm, pitch, and emphasis on syllables) to accommodate hearing loss and cognitive needs.
2. Say consonants clearly and loudly. Avoid mumbling.
3. Listen to yourself talk, and watch this person to see if you are being heard and understood.

L. Do I speak in a low pitch?

STRATEGIES:

1. Lower the pitch of your voice. Normal age related hearing changes make it more difficult to hear high pitched sounds (including consonants such as “f” and “s” and words such as “food” and “bath”). A low pitched voice may be more effective than talking louder, and may also sound calmer and more reassuring.

M. Do I talk slowly when necessary to allow time for processing?

STRATEGIES:

1. Conserve this person’s energy by making it easy for them to understand you.
2. Slow the pace of your sentences to allow them time to understand what you are saying.
3. Continue to sound natural and normal while talking more slowly. Avoid changing the normal rhythm and pitch of the sounds and words you use.
4. Watch this person to help you know how slowly to talk. They should not have to work hard to follow your words. Watch to see if the slow pace of your words feels calm and reassuring to them, particularly if they are anxious, confused, or uncertain.

N. Do I use pauses when I talk to allow time for processing and responding?

STRATEGIES:

1. Conserve this person’s energy by making it easy for them to understand you.
2. Give this person enough time to absorb and process what you say and do.
3. Give this person enough time to respond to what you say and do.
4. Pause between sentences, phrases, concepts, and tasks.
5. Pause only in natural places in a conversation or sentence.

EXAMPLES for #N.5:

- *Pause between options in a question, such as “Would you like to go for a walk [pause] or look at a photo album here?”*
 - *“It’s hot in here. [pause] Should I turn on the fan?”*
6. Keep your pauses only as long as necessary, so you don’t disrupt the natural flow or rhythm of the task or conversation.
 7. Adapt your timing and placement of pauses to this person’s needs at this moment. Avoid pausing so long this person forgets what you are saying or thinks your sentence has ended.
 8. Give this person any additional time they need to produce speech or to respond with their body.

O. Do I wait to talk until there is no other noise?

STRATEGIES:

1. Wait to speak until the background noises or voices are gone. Background noises make hearing more difficult with normal age-related hearing changes and attention more difficult with cognitive needs.
2. Conserve this person’s energy, even when they can hear and attend, by reducing the background or competing noise.
3. Turn off fans, TVs, etc.
4. Close the door.
5. Move to a quiet place for conversations.
6. Have only one conversation occur at a time.

P. Do I give a clear and honest answer to each question this person asks?

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

STRATEGIES:

1. When this person asks a question or seems to want to know something, give an honest answer as clearly and as compassionately as possible.
2. Give only the information that was requested. Giving too much information can create anxiety and confusion.
3. Adapt the amount and nature of information you give to this person's needs and desires, cognitive abilities, and the circumstances.

EXAMPLES for #P.3:

- *When this person asks, "Where is my husband?" avoid saying their deceased husband is dead unless you are sure they won't be surprised and grieve. You might say, "Your family knows you are here." or "Your husband is not here right now." or "Tell me about your husband." or "Your husband is a good man."*
4. Respond to each question as it is asked, rather than avoiding it or changing the subject. After a brief response, you can redirect their attention to something appealing, such as food or a favorite activity. If this person is asking the question because of concerns or distress, address their concerns and feelings before redirecting their attention.

EXAMPLES for #P.4:

- *You may say "Are you worried?" or "Tell me about the work you and your husband did on the farm. What was it like?" or "Did you have a favorite room at home?" or "Do you have a favorite spot here?"*
5. When a question reflects a feeling, responding to the feeling may be more important than answering the question with facts only. Address this person's concerns and feelings before or instead of focusing on the facts.

EXAMPLES for #P.5:

- *If this person asks "Will you take me home?" when they feel confused or lonely, avoid saying "This is your home now." You might hug this person and say "I can see why you'd want to go home." or "Are you ok? Are you worried?" or "Did you have a favorite room at home? Do you have a favorite spot here?" Then say, "Let's have some ice cream now, and we'll talk more about this later."*
6. Avoid saying "no" as much as possible. Respond positively and with alternative suggestions. Address this person's feelings and concerns as you respond.

EXAMPLES for #P.6:

- *If this person asks "When is the bus coming?" you might say "Oh, are you looking for the bus? Are you ok? Are you worried? It is important to know when it is coming. Let's look up that information in a little bit; right now could you please give me some advice about supper?"*
- *If this person wants to go outside in their socks when there is snow, you might say "Oh that would be fun! Let's talk about that after supper. Right now I wonder could you please give me some advice about supper?"*

Q. Do I answer questions as though this is the first time they were asked?

STRATEGIES:

1. When repeated questioning is due to memory loss, use the same response (words, facial expressions, and gestures) every time they ask the same question, if the first response seemed to satisfy or comfort them. Do this even if the question is repeated frequently over a very short period of time, since a repeated successful response will likely continue to be successful.
2. A question may be repeated because this person thinks more time has passed since the last time they asked the question, than has actually passed. In this case, change your response to the repeated question.
3. Avoid embarrassing or confusing this person by reminding them they have already asked that question or that you're tired of answering it. Calmly repeat and reassure them.

R. Do I avoid saying "no" and suggest alternatives instead?

STRATEGIES:

1. Avoid saying "no" when this person makes a request verbally or nonverbally, since they may have difficulty processing both a "no" response and their own emotional reactions to the response at the same

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

time. It may also be hard for them to consider how to act in response to the “no”.

2. Suggest another time or an alternative action.

EXAMPLES for #R.2:

- *Instead of saying “No, it’s too cold to go outside”, try saying “Oh that would be fun! Maybe we can later. Right now, could you please help me with supper?”*

S. Does the sound or tone of my voice help convey my meaning? (For example, is it obvious from the pitch of my voice at the end of a sentence that I have asked a question? Or is it obvious that I am trying to soothe by the gentle sound of my voice?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Match the pace and tone of your voice with your meaning and intent.

EXAMPLES for #S.1:

- *Speak slowly and soothingly if you want to reassure this person.*
 - *Avoid speaking quickly with staccato syllables as you try to calm this person (such as when they want to go home to feed their children who are now grown up), or to give them reasons they shouldn’t do something (such as a rapid list of reasons they shouldn’t go out in the cold with just their pajamas and slippers on).*
2. Pause and focus on the message you want to convey. Choose an emotional tone that will match your message and will allow this person to more easily hear and understand you. Remind yourself this will likely save both of you time and frustration.

EXAMPLES for #S.2:

- *If you are anxious that this person will try to leave the building when it isn’t safe for them to do so, take a breath and calm yourself as you remind yourself of the message you want to convey.*
 - *Speak calmly and in a light friendly tone. Avoid speaking quickly with staccato syllables as you try to convince them to stay inside by rapidly giving them reasons they shouldn’t go out in the cold with just their pajamas and slippers on.*
3. Be alert to the pitches within a sentence. Avoid raising the pitch at the end of a sentence, unless you are asking a question.
 4. When asking a question, be sure to raise the pitch of your voice at the end.

EXAMPLES for #S.4:

- *Say “Would you like to go to the store with me?” instead of “I am wondering if you want to go to the store.”*

T. Do my questions invite opinions or “yes” and “no” responses, rather than facts or information?

STRATEGIES:

1. Avoid asking this person directly for information, if they have a “memory problem”. They may not be able to answer and might get nervous, embarrassed or flustered. They may have the information, but may have difficulty accessing it or telling it to you. Frequently, a “memory problem” is actually an access or communication problem.
2. Ask questions that only require a “yes” or “no” response.

EXAMPLES for #T.2:

- *Ask “Would you like eggs for breakfast?” rather than “What would you like for breakfast?”*
3. Ask for opinions. Sometimes the information might be included in the response.

EXAMPLES for #T.3:

- *Ask “They say parents should never give candy to a child now. What do you think about that?” rather than “How many children do you have?” This person might respond with “Honey, I gave all my four children candy after supper every day, and they are just fine now.” They might even continue to name all of their children, their professions, and their current cities of residence to demonstrate how successful they are!*

U. Do I let this person know what time of day it is, whenever necessary?

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

STRATEGIES:

1. Tell this person what time of day it is.

EXAMPLES for #U.1:

- *Say that it is morning when they wake up.*
2. Keep daily activities, events, and task steps of daily routines in a consistent order, so this person begins to sense what comes next. This provides a basic structure to time, even when they don't know what time it is.

V. Do I let this person know how much time has passed, whenever necessary?

STRATEGIES:

1. Tell this person how much time has passed when they seem to need to know, since they may have difficulty accurately recognizing time and its passing.

EXAMPLES for #V.1:

- *When this person is sitting at the table eating a meal, they may not know whether they have been sitting there for 2 minutes or 2 hours. If they aren't feeling hungry, or if their attention has shifted from the food, they may leave the table after only a few minutes of eating. In this situation, you might casually say "These beans are delicious. Since we only just began eating them, they are still warm. I'll cool them a little."*
2. Keep daily activities, events, and task steps of daily routines in a consistent order and each with a consistent duration, so this person begins to know what comes next and can track time passing. This provides a basic structure to time, even when they don't know how much time has passed.

W. Do I tell this person when a task is done?

STRATEGIES:

1. Gently tell this person when a task is done, since this person may be unable to stop doing the task, or to recognize when the task is completed.

EXAMPLES for #W.1:

- *This person may wash the same placemat over and over. If it is time to stop, say "Oh, what a nice job you've done." as you gently remove the placemat from their hand.*

X. Do I verbally prepare this person before touching any part of their body? (For example, by asking permission to touch or by gently informing them verbally?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself this person may be particularly sensitive to touch. Your touch might send sensations such as "pins and needles", "bugs crawling", or "tickling" up and down their skin, or be extraordinarily painful or uncomfortable. A soft touch might feel like a hit, or like intense heat or cold. This person may have experienced physical, emotional, or sexual discomfort, pain, or trauma in the past or currently and may be emotionally vulnerable.
2. Discern the level of comfort this person has with touch, including your touch at this time.
3. Watch this person carefully for evidence of resistance to or discomfort with your touch.
4. Alert this person that you are going to touch them before doing so. Anticipation can help this person prepare physically and emotionally, and can help their body reduce the undesired sensations.
5. Ask permission to touch. Acknowledge this person's autonomy and right to choose or say "no".
6. Tell them you will be careful and gentle.
7. Explain what you are touching and how. For example, say "I am going to hold your hand and wash your arm."
8. Adapt your touch to this person's comfort level and timing.
9. See additional strategies and more detail about touch in the CAIS Cognitive Strategies Sensory J and K sections and Motor G and H sections, and the CAIS Communication Strategies Body Language I section.

Y. Do I ask this person to move a part of their body rather than moving it myself?

STRATEGIES:

1. Encourage this person to move the body part themselves, rather than you moving it for them. This will likely be less uncomfortable or painful physically.
2. Give this person time to prepare themselves mentally and physically for the movement.

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

3. Give them the amount of time they need and want to prepare to move their body.
4. Remind yourself that by encouraging this person to move their own body or part of their body, you are acknowledging their autonomy and control over the action, and you are giving them the opportunity to refuse and to move it at their own pace and time.
5. Give this person the opportunity to move in the way they want to. They will likely sense or know the least painful way to move it.
6. Ask this person verbally to move the body part before touching them. Adapt your request so they can understand your request as easily as possible.

EXAMPLES for #Y.6:

- *Add a nonverbal cue. Say "Please lift your arm." as you touch their arm.*

Z. Do I verbally and nonverbally prepare this person before a part of their body moves? (For example, before they or I move a part of their body, do I touch that part of their body, if they are comfortable with touch? Do I ask them to move it? Do I ask permission to move it? Do I inform them it will be moving?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Prepare this person both physically and emotionally, since moving a body part can be difficult, painful or uncomfortable due to age, brain changes, weakness, rigidity (particularly in the joints), injury, or current or past experience with physical, emotional, or sexual discomfort, pain, or trauma.
2. Remind yourself that discomfort with touch and movement may be unpredictable. Each part of this person's body may have a different level of sensitivity and discomfort. The presence and degree of sensitivity or discomfort may also change from one moment to the next, or may fluctuate rapidly.

EXAMPLES for #Z.2:

- *This person may feel pain suddenly without warning.*
 - *This person may feel the water temperature is too cold then too warm then too cold again within just a few minutes.*
3. Watch this person's face and body and listen to what they say and the sounds they make to recognize evidence of the level of sensitivity or discomfort with touch and movement at this time.
 4. Go slowly enough to allow this person time to prepare for your touch, to move, and to respond to your questions and comments.
 5. Encourage this person to move the body part themselves, rather than your moving it for them. This will likely be less uncomfortable.
 6. Ask this person verbally to move the body part before touching them.

EXAMPLES for #Z.6:

- *"Please lift your arm."*
7. Ask this person verbally for permission to move their body part if this person cannot move it.

EXAMPLES for #Z.7:

- *"May I lift your arm?" or "May I help you?"*
8. Add a nonverbal gesture with your verbal request. Whether or not this person easily understands and/or produces words, a nonverbal gesture can make it easier for them to focus on their body part.

EXAMPLES for #Z.8:

- *Point to the body part or to your own body part.*
9. With the palm of your hand, gently but firmly touch or move your hand on the body part to be moved, in order to draw this person's attention to that body part when necessary.
 10. Since this person's body part might be stiff or uncomfortable, move your hand on the body part and joint to be moved, firmly but gently with the palm of your hand, before the body part and joint are moved by either you or them. Begin away from the joint or painful area, and move your hand toward the joint and painful area.
 11. Use warm water or warm, damp washcloths draped on the body part and joint, to reduce discomfort.
 12. Remind yourself that this person may be particularly sensitive to touch. Your touch might send sensations such as "pins and needles", "bugs crawling", or "tickling" up and down their skin, or be extraordinarily painful or uncomfortable. A soft touch might feel like a hit, or like intense heat or cold. Alert this person and ask their permission before you touch them. Anticipation can help them prepare emotionally and help their body to reduce the undesired sensation.
 13. Minimize the number of times your hand leaves and returns to their body, since their body may have

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

difficulty adjusting to the initiation of touch.

14. Use the palm of your hand rather than individual fingers when touching to minimize the number of contact points between your hand and their body. To grasp a part of this person's body, place your palm on their skin, then keep your fingers together and gently roll your fingers outward from your palm onto more of their skin to reduce the discomfort of initiating touch to new parts of their skin.
15. Use a gentle but firm pressure when touching, when light touch seems to be particularly uncomfortable. Avoid applying so much pressure that your touch hurts this person.
16. See additional strategies and more detail about touch, pain, and movement in the CAIS Cognitive Strategies Sensory J, I, and K sections, and Motor G and H sections, and the CAIS Communication Strategies Body Language I section."

The Communication Intervention Strategies

III. BODY LANGUAGE

Shelly E. Weaverdyck, Ph.D.

Look for ways I can:

- Use my body to communicate with this person
- Avoid unintentionally communicating confusing or distressing messages with my body
- Address this person's sensory and cognitive abilities by how I position and move my body

A. Do I use my body enough to communicate with this person? (For example, by using facial expressions and hand gestures with my words to help them understand?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Use all of your body to communicate.
2. Avoid relying simply on words or tone of voice to get your message across, since this person may depend on watching your lips, face, hands, and the rest of your body to interpret what is difficult for them to hear (due to normal age related or other hearing loss) or understand (due to brain changes).
3. Remind yourself that this person may respond more to how you appear than to how you sound, and more to how you sound than to the words you say.

B. Is my body telling this person what I want it to say? Do I avoid gestures or facial expressions that could be misinterpreted? (For example, do I raise my eyebrows rather than frown when I want to show concern?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Be aware of what your body is communicating.
2. Watch this person to see if you are unintentionally communicating a message, or communicating in a way that distresses or confuses them.

EXAMPLES for #B.2:

- *Your frown could be interpreted as anger or anxiety, rather than concern.*
 - *Your moving quickly could be confusing, or interpreted as impatience or irritation.*
3. Avoid making your gestures so big they confuse or distract this person.

C. Do my body, face, eyes, and words all match? (For example, do I avoid moving too quickly or with startling movements while using soothing words and smiling?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Be consistent with your body, words, and voice, so they all communicate the same message and level of calmness and intensity.
2. Avoid confusing this person with mixed messages: be aware of your body, especially when you feel rushed, tense, irritated, or impatient.
3. Remind yourself that this person will likely respond more to body language than to words. If you speak soothing words and smile while your body is tense and moving quickly, this person will likely respond to the tension in your body rather than to your words or smile.

D. Do I place myself so this person sees and notices me easily?

STRATEGIES:

1. Identify which part of this person's visual field is optimal (that is, most effective) for them.

EXAMPLES for #D.1:

- *Identify the spot in the environment where, if this person stares straight ahead without moving their head, they see objects and people most easily, quickly, and accurately.*

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

2. Approach and position yourself in the part of this person's visual field that is optimal for them at this moment, since there may be visual problems, or this person's brain may not be able to tell this person to notice everything in their visual field.
3. Approach and position yourself on this person's stronger side, particularly if one side of their body is weaker than the other side due to a stroke or changes to one side of the brain.
4. Approach and position yourself in front of this person, if both sides of their body are equal in strength (except for physical weakness of a particular body part, that is, there is no evidence of a stroke or changes to one side of the brain).
5. Place your face at eye level with this person, whether they are standing, sitting, or lying down. Avoid requiring this person to move their eyes up or down.
6. If this person is lying down, you may have to stand by their hip rather than by their head so their eyes can look straight at you instead of looking up.
7. Quietly position yourself close to this person so they see you before you speak. Be close enough to reach for their hand. (Touch their hand only if they are comfortable with touch.) Avoid being too close to this person.

EXAMPLES for #D.7:

- *Avoid positioning yourself too far away, too close, too high, too low, too far to the left, or too far to the right.*
8. Hold an object for this person in the optimal part of their visual field. Hold it close enough for them to see it easily. Avoid holding an object too close to this person's torso which may be too low in their visual field.

EXAMPLES for #D.8:

- *Avoid holding the object too far away, too close, too high, too low, too far to the left, or too far to the right.*
9. Remind yourself that this person's ability to see and the optimal part of this person's visual field may fluctuate or be unpredictable at any given moment. Watch closely and adjust your position or the position of an object as their ability to see changes.

E. Do I use gestures when they are helpful and are my gestures slow and small enough?

1. Use hand and body gestures to help this person understand what you are saying or to simply avoid using words. This may reduce confusion for this person. How you appear will likely communicate even more effectively than how you sound and what you say.
2. Remind yourself that this person is likely not seeing where objects are in space in the same way you are. It may take significant energy for them to locate you or objects in space.
3. Gesture in the optimal part of this person's visual field at this moment.

EXAMPLES for #E.3:

- *Identify the spot in the environment where, if this person stares straight ahead without moving their head, they see objects and people most easily, quickly, and accurately.*
4. Be alert to your own hand and body movements. Watch to see if they affect how well this person is understanding you or how they feel. Avoid fatiguing or distressing this person in subtle ways.
 5. Gesture only when necessary, to avoid tiring this person unnecessarily, even when this person can perceive relatively correctly.
 6. Gesture slowly to make it easier for them to follow your hand or body.
 7. Make your gestures small enough so that this person doesn't have to move their head to see the full gesture.
 8. Make your gestures clear enough so they can easily interpret them.

F. Do I change my position only when necessary and do I move slowly and only short distances? (For example, do I move to another spot in the room slowly and only if it helps this person?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that this person is likely not seeing where objects are in space in the same way you are. It may take significant energy for them to locate you or objects in space.
2. Be alert to your own body movements. Watch to see if they affect how well this person is understanding you or how they feel. Avoid fatiguing or distressing this person in subtle ways.
3. Move only when necessary, to avoid tiring this person unnecessarily, even when this person can perceive

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

relatively correctly.

4. Move slowly to make it easier for them to follow your movement.
5. Move short distances, so this person has to move their head as little as possible to see where you are.
6. When you have to move quickly or a long distance, do it out of this person's sight.

G. Am I at eye-level with this person when I interact with them? (For example, sitting near them, or kneeling if their eyes are looking down?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Position yourself in the part of this person's visual field that is optimal for them at this moment.
2. Identify which part of this person's visual field is optimal (that is, most effective) for them.

EXAMPLES for #G.2:

- *Identify the spot in the environment where, if this person stares straight ahead without moving their head, they see objects and people most easily, quickly, and accurately.*
3. Place your face at eye-level when you are interacting with this person, whether they are standing, sitting, or lying down, so they can see and respond to you more easily.
 4. Avoid requiring this person to move their eyes up or down to see your face and eyes.
 5. If this person is lying down, you may have to stand by their hip rather than by their head so their eyes can look straight at you instead of looking up.
 6. Sit rather than crouch, to show more respect and to feel more relaxed.
 7. Kneel and look up at them if their eyes are looking down.
 8. Watch for their eyes to move and watch your eyes. If necessary, move yourself to maintain the eye contact as you interact with them.

H. Do I make and keep eye contact with this person, if they are comfortable with eye contact?

STRATEGIES:

1. Maintain eye contact with this person when interacting, so you can keep their attention.
2. Discern the level of comfort this person has with eye contact, including eye contact with you at this time.
3. Watch this person's eyes and face, so you can see more easily how they are responding to what you are saying or doing and if they are understanding you.
4. Use eye contact to show you are giving this person your full attention.
5. Show compassion and respect with your eyes.
6. Position yourself close to this person, so they can watch your eyes and face to better understand what you are saying, especially when they are hard of hearing or having difficulty processing your words.
7. If necessary, move your own body to maintain the eye contact as you interact with this person.

I. Do I touch this person frequently to reassure, comfort, communicate, inform, offer companionship, and orient them, if they are comfortable with my touch? Do I touch in a way that is helpful and comfortable for this person?

STRATEGIES:

1. Use touch with this person frequently, but only when they are comfortable with it.
2. Note how this person feels about touch at this moment and adapt your touch so it is helpful and comfortable for this person.
3. Remind yourself that touching this person is very important, especially if they have sensory loss in vision and hearing.
4. Touch them to alert them and to help them be aware of their surroundings. Use touch to bring them sensations from the environment. Use this sensory stimulation to keep them from feeling isolated.
 - Help them know you are there.
 - Be present with them. Offer companionship without expecting or requesting anything from them.

EXAMPLES for #I.4

- *Hold their hand, put your arm around their shoulders, or move your hand on their back, whether or not you are talking with them.*
- *Offer soft objects to hold.*
- *Offer objects with various textures to touch and hold.*

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

5. Remind yourself that all touch is a form of communication, even when it is careless or unintentional. When you touch this person, no matter how severe their cognitive needs are, they may sense your emotions, your message, and your intentions.

EXAMPLES for #I.5

- *Your touch can nonverbally convey calm, efficiency, a request to move a body part, compassion, patience, companionship, and friendliness.*
 - *Touch can also unintentionally convey irritation, anxiety, frustration, and other distressing feelings and messages.*
 - *Touch can unintentionally convey the message that this person is an object or merely a task that needs to be done.*
6. Touch this person in a way that shows respect, care, concern, and support. Preserve their sense of dignity. Help them know and feel they are important.
 7. Touch this person to help them understand what you are saying or doing.
 8. Touch this person's body part, when talking about that body part.

EXAMPLES for #I.8:

- *Touch their arm when asking them to lift the arm.*
 - *Touch a specific part of their body when asking if that body part hurts or if they are in pain.*
9. Use touch to communicate comfort and reassurance and to help calm them, if touch is comforting to this person.
 10. Use touch to keep this person's attention. Touch a part of this person's body that is comfortable with touch and occasionally squeeze or move your hand gently on their skin to draw their attention back to you as needed.
 11. Touch this person so you can feel their reaction to what you are saying or doing.

EXAMPLES for #I.11:

- *Be alert for stiffening or increased tension in a body part.*
12. Keep watching this person to see how they are responding to your touch.
 13. Touch this person only when they are comfortable being touched. If their comfort level changes as you are touching them, then stop touching them.
 14. Before touching, remind yourself that this person may be particularly sensitive to touch, uncomfortable when touched, or simply not like to be touched for a variety of reasons. These reasons could include among others:
 - Neurological sensations
 - Physical pain or discomfort
 - Emotional pain and distress
 15. Notice if your touch is sending neurological sensations such as "pins and needles", "bugs crawling", or "tickling" up and down their skin, or extraordinary pain or discomfort. Notice if a soft touch feels like a hit or like intense heat or cold. Notice if your touch creates pain or discomfort in another part of their body that wasn't touched.

EXAMPLES for I.15

- *This person might feel abdominal discomfort when you touch their arm or their arm touches a table in front of them.*
16. Notice if this person feels physical pain or discomfort from a current or past injury, arthritis, rigidity, or various physical and medical conditions.
 17. Notice if this person seems to have experienced emotional, physical, or sexual trauma, pain, or discomfort in their past or currently and is emotionally vulnerable. Their pain from their experience may be easily triggered by a touch.
 18. Take this person's feelings and behavior seriously and respond with kindness and calm patience, especially when this person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, certain people, or words they hear. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma.
 19. Be alert and prepared for both positive and distressing emotional and physical reactions to your touch.
 20. Note if this person seems to withdraw, become very still, or agitated, or if they stare or avoid eye contact. Such reactions, even if they are subtle, may be an indication they are uncomfortable with your touch.
 21. Ask this person for permission to touch a particular part of their body before touching it.
 22. Gently tell this person that you plan to touch them as a way of helping them.

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

23. Just before you touch, alert this person that you will now touch a particular part of their body.
24. Watch this person to see how they respond to touch on a specific spot or spots on their body. If they are sensitive to touch, then avoid touching this person or that spot or spots.
25. Remind yourself that discomfort with touch may be unpredictable. Each part of this person's body may have a different level of sensitivity and discomfort. The presence and degree of sensitivity or discomfort may also change from one moment to the next. Watch this person's face and body and listen to what they say and the sounds they make to recognize evidence of their level of sensitivity or discomfort with touch at this time.
26. Go slowly enough to allow this person time to prepare mentally, physically, and emotionally for your touch.
27. Try touching using the palm of your hand with gentle sustained firmness.
28. Minimize the number of times your hand leaves and returns to their body, since their body may have difficulty adjusting to the initiation of touch.
29. Use the palm of your hand rather than individual fingers when touching to minimize the number of contact points between your hand and this person's body.
30. Use a gentle but firm pressure when touching, when light touch seems to be particularly uncomfortable. Avoid applying so much pressure that your touch hurts this person.
31. Protect this person's skin where it is fragile. Move gently and slowly. Use cream or oil to reduce friction.
32. See additional strategies and more detail about touch, pain, and movement in the CAIS Cognitive Strategies Sensory J, I, and K sections and Motor G and H sections.

J. Do I model for this person? (For example, do I do the task myself so they can see me while they are also doing the task? Do I do a task step to show them how to do it before they do it? Am I upbeat and positive?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself, that this person may be able to better understand what to do by watching you, rather than listening to your words.
2. Show this person how to act or do a task.
3. Do the task with this person.

EXAMPLES for #J.3:

- *Wash their arm while they are also washing their arm.*

4. Model the task for them.

EXAMPLES for #J.4:

- *Sit beside this person and wipe a placemat while they wipe another placemat.*

5. Avoid expecting this person to act a certain way or perform a task when you are doing something different.

EXAMPLES for #J.5:

- *During a meal, sit down and eat your meal at the same time they are eating. Have the food already at the table in easy reach, so there is less need for you to go get something, stand, or walk around.*

6. Remind yourself that this person's feelings may reflect events and the feelings expressed in the environment. If the environment around this person is calm and comfortable, they will more likely feel calm and comfortable.

7. Avoid mirroring this person's emotional state, particularly if they are anxious or distressed. Look and sound calm and in control to communicate reassurance.

EXAMPLES for #J.7:

- *If this person is distressed, avoid using your facial expression, words, and body movements to show distress in an attempt to demonstrate agreement or sympathy. Avoid communicating the message that you agree this is a terrible thing and you are anxious or angry on their behalf. Instead, show a calm demeanor and relaxed facial expression that say you are confident this can be resolved and everything will be ok.*
- *Say soothingly "Yes, I can see why you might feel that way," rather than: "Well, I should say so, that was just terrible of them to do that!"*

The Communication Intervention Strategies

IV. APPROACH

Shelly E. Weaverdyck, Ph.D.

Look for ways I can:

- Introduce a topic, activity, or request in a way that helps this person feel positive about it
- Set an upbeat, cheerful, relaxed, and comfortable emotional tone
- Prevent anxiety, uncertainty, or frustration in this person

A. Do I build trust with this person? (For example, by conversing before mentioning a task such as bathing or getting dressed?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Focus on helping this person feel comfortable and relaxed with you.
2. Remind yourself that this person may not consciously remember who you are.
3. Remind yourself that they may have an emotional response to you based on previous experiences with you or others.
4. Use specific strategies to build this person's trust in you.
5. Converse in a friendly tone.
6. Spend time with them.
7. Smile and touch them reassuringly if they find touch comforting.
8. Mention the task to be done only after you feel this person trusts you.
9. Invite them to do the task by your tone and phrasing, rather than simply requesting or demanding.
10. Say that you'll do the task together.
11. Take this person's feelings and behavior seriously and respond with kindness and calm patience, especially when this person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, certain people, or words they hear. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma.

B. Do I avoid embarrassment about private activities? (For example, by inviting this person to use the toilet only when we are alone, so that other people don't hear me ask?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that this person may have enough social awareness to be embarrassed when their privacy is compromised, even if they appear to be nonverbal and unaware.
2. Consider others' embarrassment when this person's private activities or information are exposed.
3. Talk with this person only in private about topics such as personal hygiene, and keep all other private activities, conversations, and information out of sight and hearing of other people.
4. When talking about or touching this person during private activities, take this person's feelings and behavior seriously and respond with kindness and calm patience, especially when this person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, certain people, or words they hear. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma.

C. Do I avoid telling this person about the whole task, and instead suggest only one step at a time, when appropriate? (For example, instead of saying "Let's take a shower.", do I say "Let's walk to the bathroom.?"?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that the idea of some tasks, such as taking a bath or shower, may feel confusing to this person.

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

2. Avoid overwhelming this person by presenting the whole task all at once, since they may feel anxious about a task, have difficulty understanding all the steps, or be unsure how to begin.
3. Suggest one task step at a time in a relaxed friendly way.

D. Do I offer options this person can understand, so they can make choices?

STRATEGIES:

1. Frequently assess this person's ability to recognize and choose among options.
2. Adapt your approach and presentation of options to this person's ability to choose among options.
3. Simplify your presentation of this person's options when they are making a choice, especially as they become increasingly confused and less able to understand multiple or abstract options or to remember them while they are making their decision.
4. Remind yourself this person can make choices and express preferences even when they have very severe cognitive needs.
5. Try to be creative when discerning what they might want or need.
6. If this person is nonverbal, encourage them to point to what they want.
7. List specific options available.

EXAMPLES for #D.7:

- Say, "Would you like eggs, cereal, or a muffin for breakfast?" rather than "What would you like for breakfast?"

8. List fewer options at a time.

EXAMPLES for #D.8:

- Say, "Would you like eggs or cereal for breakfast?" rather than "Would you like eggs, cereal, or a muffin for breakfast?"

9. Present each option as a "yes/no" choice, when necessary.

EXAMPLES for #D.9:

- Say, "Would you like eggs for breakfast?" and then, regardless of their response say, "Would you like oatmeal for breakfast?" in order to confirm what their desires might be.

10. Show this person the options rather than simply naming them.

EXAMPLES for #D.10:

- Show them eggs and cereal to make the options more concrete and visible.

11. Help this person feel or taste the options, if they are unable to see or recognize objects.

EXAMPLES for #D.11:

- Put a small taste of each option in their mouth and watch for their response to each option.

E. Do I suggest a refreshment or fun enticement to help this person participate?

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that this person may not see the need for the task, may need other incentives to complete the task, may wish to avoid the task, or may feel overwhelmed when faced with the task.
2. Give them a reason to do the task.

EXAMPLES for #E.2:

- Say bathing will help them look good for visitors they are expecting.

3. Distract them with another desire.

EXAMPLES for #E.3:

- Anticipating coffee and a donut after the bath, or eating pie during the bath.

4. Reduce the focus on the task itself.

EXAMPLES for #E.4:

- Talk about the pie they are eating during the bath.

5. Make it easier for this person to participate.

EXAMPLES for #E.5:

- Joke or rhythmically sing when walking to the bathroom.

F. Do I rhythmically sing or march to a place when appropriate, to help this person walk and participate? (For example, do I use rhythm when I walk with them to the dining room or bathroom?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that when trying to perform a task such as walking, this person's brain changes may make it more difficult for them to respond to verbal requests or instructions, or to "talk" their own way through a task (that is, give themselves verbal instructions). Music and rhythm use various parts of the brain, so this person may be able to sing or speak with rhythm when they have difficulty talking or finding words otherwise. They may also be able to walk when there is music or rhythm when they usually have difficulty walking without music or rhythm.

2. Make use of the parts of the brain that process music, rhythm, and nonverbal information and abilities.

EXAMPLES for #F.2:

- *Sing rhythmically or provide music with a beat to help them walk, stand, and move to the music.*
3. Walk or march with them in a rhythmic way to model and to perform the task together.
 4. Dance with this person to help with exercise and entertainment when they have trouble walking.
 5. When this person is having difficulty finding words, speaking, or understanding you, use rhythmic speech or singsong sayings if this is helpful.

EXAMPLES for #F.5:

- *Casually "chant" in a low key upbeat way "This is the time we eat some bread!" when it is time to eat lunch.*

G. Do I laugh, joke, and use humor in a concrete and emotionally supportive way?

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that this person will likely create and respond to humor, regardless of their abilities.
2. Use humor to make a situation fun or more tolerable.

EXAMPLES for #G.2:

- *Laugh together about a picture on the wall over the bathtub of a dog wearing a silly hat.*
3. Use humor to help this person feel good.
 4. Adapt your humor to this person's cognitive abilities and understanding.
 5. Keep the humor focused on the task or immediate situation.
 6. Avoid jokes that have to do with the past.
 7. Avoid complex jokes with puns or complicated scenarios.
 8. Avoid "put down" jokes that tease this person or any ethnic group.
 9. Avoid jokes that rely on objects and events that aren't present or aren't concrete.

EXAMPLES for #G.9:

- *If you try a joke, "What do you call a cow with no legs?" They may respond, "You don't call (that is, shout for) a cow," rather than be able to give or understand the answer (that is, ground beef).*
10. Avoid jokes that could trigger or remind this person of current or past emotional, physical, or sexual discomfort or trauma.

H. Do I stay calm, whatever else is happening? (For example, even when we are being silly together, or when this person is angry or frightened?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that you can have a direct effect on how this person is feeling at the moment.
2. Remind yourself that sometimes this person might mirror your emotions.
3. Help this person feel relaxed and comfortable by creating a relaxed and calm tone in your interactions.
4. Even when you are joking or being silly with them, be calm, gentle, and respectful.
5. When this person is anxious or angry, avoid mirroring their anxiety or anger in your face and movements.
6. Respond with calm reassuring facial expressions and body movements, including raised eyebrows rather than a frown of concern that could be misinterpreted.
7. Respond with words and a tone of voice that affirms this person without increasing or mirroring their emotion.

EXAMPLES for #H.7:

- *Say "Yes, I can see why you might feel that way," rather than: "Well, I should say so, that was just terrible of them to do that!"*

The Communication Intervention Strategies

V. OBSERVATION

Shelly E. Weaverdyck, Ph.D.

Look for ways I can notice and recognize:

- How this person is feeling
- How well this person is understanding
- What this person is trying to express
- Evidence this person is going to be frustrated, anxious, angry, or distressed
- Evidence this person may engage in behavior that is distressing to themselves or others
- How to best respond to this person's feelings and behavior

A. Do I watch and listen to this person carefully for nonverbal and verbal feedback, so I can note how this person is feeling and then anticipate or respond to frustration, anxiety, or distress?

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that your goal is to help this person feel comfortable and content, so their feelings are more important than the task you are performing.

EXAMPLES for #A.1:

- *When bathing, it is more important for this person to feel good than to be clean. If they need to be clean, try to find a way to help them be clean and still feel good.*
2. Focus more on this person and their feelings than on the task.
 3. Face and watch this person at all times, even when performing other tasks, such as speaking on a phone, rinsing out a washcloth, or talking to someone else.
 4. Listen to the words this person is using and to the volume and tone of voice to better understand their feelings.
 5. Listen to any changes in the tone and volume of this person's voice (whether or not words are used) that might indicate emotions, pain, or change in their level of understanding.
 6. Watch for subtle changes in this person's body or vocalizations.
 7. Respond immediately to the beginning signs of possible frustration or anxiety.
 8. Be alert when this person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, certain people, or words they hear. Take this person's feelings and behavior seriously and respond immediately with kindness and calm patience. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma.

B. Do I watch this person's whole body for changes that suggest confusion, anxiety, or something else they are feeling? (For example, do I watch for tightening leg muscles, clenching fists, facial grimacing, widening eyes, rapid eye movements, or brief frowns?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that this person's body is always expressing emotions, level of pain, and the ability to understand what is being said or occurring, regardless of their cognitive abilities, even when they are nonverbal or lying still.
2. Note any changes or movement in this person's body during a conversation, activity, or event. Such changes and movements can indicate a shift in emotions, pain, or possible confusion.
3. Pay particular attention to this person's face and eyes, which may be the most communicative part of their body.
4. Watch this person's hands and entire body, not just their face or eyes.
5. Touch this person's body to feel when subtle tightening and relaxing occurs. Touch a part of this person's

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

body that is comfortable being touched.

6. Be alert when this person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, certain people, or words they hear. Take this person's feelings and behavior seriously and respond immediately with kindness and calm patience. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma.

C. Do I watch this person's eyes when we talk?

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that this person's eyes may be the most communicative part of their body.
2. Watch for changes, including subtle changes in this person's eyes that might indicate emotions, pain, or change in their level of understanding.

EXAMPLES for #C.2:

- *Changes might include widening eyes, rapid eye movements, blinking, closing eyes, glancing off to one side or down or up, wincing, narrowing of eyes, sudden focusing on you or another person or an object, or a brief frown between their eyes.*

D. Does this person seem comfortable and relaxed?

STRATEGIES:

1. Focus more on this person and their feelings than on the task.
2. Remind yourself that your goal is to help this person feel comfortable and content, so their feelings are more important than the task you are performing.

EXAMPLES for #D.2:

- *When bathing, it is more important for this person to feel good than to be clean. If they need to be clean, try to find a way to help them be clean and still feel good.*
3. Watch for smiles and a relaxed face and body, including relaxation in all parts of the body. This will likely indicate this person is content and comfortable.

E. Is this person responding positively to what I am saying or doing?

STRATEGIES:

1. Listen and watch for this person's responses to what you are saying or doing.
2. Remind yourself that understanding this person's responses to what you are saying or doing is crucial to figuring out how to help them feel comfortable.
3. Face and watch this person at all times, even when other performing tasks, such as speaking on a phone, rinsing out a washcloth, or talking to someone else.
4. Remind yourself that this person's positive response is more important than the completion of a task.

F. Does this person seem to understand me?

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that communication with this person is successful only if they understand you.
2. Watch this person to make sure they understood you before going on to your next comment.

G. Do I give this person enough time to absorb what I say and then give them time to respond, so I can more easily observe their feelings and their ability to understand and to perform a task?

STRATEGIES:

1. Pause often and long enough to allow this person to absorb and respond to what you do and say.
2. Pause often and long enough to allow you time to observe whether this person understood you and is feeling comfortable.
3. Pause between sentences, concepts, and tasks.
4. Pause only in natural places in a conversation or sentence.

EXAMPLES for #G.4:

- *Pause between options in a question, such as "Would you like to go for a walk [pause] or look at a photo album here?"*

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

- *“It’s hot in here. [pause] Should I turn on the fan?”*
5. Keep your pauses only as long as necessary, so you don’t disrupt the natural flow or rhythm of the task or conversation.
 6. Adapt your timing and placement of pauses to this person’s needs at this moment. Avoid pausing so long that this person forgets what you are saying or thinks your sentence has ended.
 7. Give this person any additional time they need to produce speech or to respond with their body.

H. Do I change my own behavior or the environment in response to this person’s reactions?

STRATEGIES:

1. Respond immediately when you see or hear evidence of emotion (positive or negative), pain, or a change in level of understanding.

EXAMPLES for #H.1:

- *Nod and smile when a person seems happy or content.*
 - *Share enthusiasm with this person when they seem interested or delighted.*
 - *Stop your movement immediately when this person seems to be in pain.*
 - *Slow down when this person seems confused or misunderstands what you said.*
2. Respond quickly enough to decrease this person’s confusion, frustration, or distress before it increases.
 3. Change your behavior or what you are saying by stopping, slowing down, reassuring, repeating yourself, using different words, or shifting to a new position, topic, or task. Adapt your behavior and what you say in any way that is helpful in response to this person’s reactions at this moment.
 4. Take this person’s feelings and behavior seriously and respond immediately with kindness and calm patience, especially when this person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, certain people, or words they hear. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma.
 5. Change the environment by removing that which is distressing or by adding positive alternatives.

EXAMPLES for #H.5:

- *Move to another room that has a calming effect on this person.*
- *Turn off the TV or radio, if it is distressing.*
- *Close the door or a curtain.*
- *Offer tea and cookies.*

The Communication Intervention Strategies

VI. DISTRACTION

Shelly E. Weaverdyck, Ph.D.

Look for ways I can:

- Use distraction or diversion to help this person
- Compensate for and reduce inappropriate distraction for this person

A. Do I know when distraction or diversion is helpful with this person? (For example, when they repeatedly try to do something that is unsafe, or when they are performing a task that is easier to do when they aren't thinking about it?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Since each individual and situation is different, adapt your response to this person to fit their individual needs and desires at this particular time.
2. Avoid distractions unless distraction would be helpful in this particular situation.
3. Respond directly to this person's questions or concerns if possible. Use distraction when a direct response would be painful, harmful, or inappropriate.

EXAMPLES for #A.3:

- *If they would grieve when told the spouse they are repeatedly looking for is deceased.*
4. Use distraction if a direct response seems ineffective.

EXAMPLES for #A.4:

- *This person asks the same question over and over and seems unsatisfied with the response.*
 - *This person continues to try to go outside in the snow when they are wearing their pajamas and slippers.*
5. Distract when focusing directly on an issue or task is too difficult for this person.

EXAMPLES for #A.5:

- *Provide a mild distraction if this person can perform a task such as getting dressed, tying their shoes, or swallowing medication more easily when they aren't thinking about it, that is they do it automatically while they think of something else.*
6. Use only as much distraction as is helpful. Using too much distraction can cause confusion.

EXAMPLES for #A.6:

- *If you are using distraction, such as conversation about this person's daughter to help this person perform a task more easily, then make as many comments as is necessary to prevent them from focusing attention on the task, but not so many that this person stops doing the task or gets confused.*
7. Watch this person's responses to your intervention strategies to discern whether to use distraction and how much is needed in a particular situation.

B. When there is behavior or a situation that is distressing, do I use humor and diversion instead of demands, argument, shame, or instructions to address the behavior or situation?

STRATEGIES:

1. Respond to the feelings behind the behavior. Then use humor and diversion if necessary to help this person meet their needs and feel comfortable.
2. Respond to this person's feelings and help resolve them before telling this person what to do.

EXAMPLES for #B.2:

- *Avoid saying "stop" or "come here" first, since this person may not be able to respond to instructions when emotions are strong. Address the emotions first by soothing or acknowledging them so this person can feel calmer, making it easier to understand your*

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

request or suggestions.

3. Use humor to distract or to emphasize positive feelings as a method to reduce distress.

EXAMPLES for #B.3:

- *Laugh together about a picture on the wall over the bathtub of a dog wearing a silly hat.*
4. Avoid focusing on the behavior, distress, or negative feelings since this might increase the distress.
 5. Avoid embarrassing this person.
 6. Avoid asking this person why they are engaged in this behavior.
 7. Avoid insisting that this person stop the behavior.
 8. Adapt your humor to this person's cognitive abilities and feelings at the time, so the humor is appropriately simple, concrete, and emotionally supportive.

EXAMPLES for #B.8:

- *If you try a joke, "What do you call a cow with no legs?" They may respond, "You don't call (that is, shout for) a cow," rather than be able to give or understand the answer (that is, ground beef).*
9. Keep the humor focused on the task or immediate situation.
 10. Avoid jokes that have to do with the past.
 11. Avoid complex jokes with puns or complicated scenarios.
 12. Avoid "put down" jokes that tease this person or any ethnic group.
 13. Avoid jokes that rely on objects and events that aren't present or aren't concrete.
 14. Suggest an alternative activity to do and combine it with humor.

EXAMPLES for #B.14:

- *Say "You know, we're having supper soon. I am so hungry, I could eat a horse. Have you ever eaten a horse? I wonder what that would be like!" and laugh.*

C. Do I avoid calling this person's attention to their behavior?

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that this person may be unaware of their behavior or may not be able to stop or modify it.
2. Discreetly distract this person, since calling their attention to the behavior may embarrass them and/or make it worse.
3. Avoid giving instructions or requests when this person is distressed, since this person likely cannot process instructions when they are focused on the behavior or feeling strong emotions.

D. Do I try to identify the feelings behind distressing words and behavior and then respond to the feelings, rather than simply to the words or behavior?

STRATEGIES:

1. Examine this person's words and behavior to identify the feelings behind the behavior.
2. Respond to this person's feelings.

EXAMPLES for #D.2:

- *Soothe with reassuring words and touch, if they are comfortable with touch.*
3. Respond to this person's words and behavior only if that is necessary to address their feelings.

E. During tasks, do I encourage this person to hold or use an item while I use a similar item? (For example, a comb while I comb their hair with another comb, or a washcloth while I wash their arm with another washcloth?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Offer this person a task object to use or hold to help orient them to the task and to what you are doing, and to encourage their participation in the task.
2. Encourage this person to hold a task object to reduce their tendency to grasp onto you or other objects in the environment.

F. Do I get this person's attention before speaking, and keep it throughout our interaction?

STRATEGIES:

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

1. Remind yourself that this person may be easily distracted by other stimuli in the environment. Other stimuli include anything that draws this person's attention. They could include people, activity, noise, a television, a radio, or objects that are too numerous or that simply attract this person's attention.
2. Be the strongest stimulus in the environment, both before and throughout your interaction with this person.
3. Get and keep this person's attention through:
 - Touching, if this person is comfortable with touch on a part of their body, to get this person's attention. Gently move your hand on their skin or gently squeeze to draw their attention back to you if their attention seems to wander.
 - Placing your face close to theirs.
 - Speaking more loudly.
 - Becoming more visible to them by positioning yourself and contrasting yourself with your surroundings.

G. Do I reduce distraction such as noise and clutter around me when I am talking to this person?

STRATEGIES:

1. Reduce noise or irrelevant stimuli when getting and keeping this person's attention.

EXAMPLES for #G.1:

- *Close the door.*
- *Turn off the TV, radio, cell phone, or intercom.*
- *Remove this person from crowded noisy spaces.*

2. Reduce the visual clutter.

EXAMPLES for #G.2:

- *Reduce the number of items in the bathroom, clothes in the closet, or items on the dinner table.*

3. Avoid standing in front of a complex visual pattern. Position yourself so that when this person is looking at you, they are looking away from groups of people, moving objects, excessive clutter, patterned wallpaper, and open doors and windows.
4. Avoid wearing excessively patterned clothes.

The Communication Intervention Strategies

VII. CONSISTENCY

Shelly E. Weaverdyck, Ph.D.

Look for ways I can:

- Keep my interactions the same and predictable as much as possible
- Have only one care partner (caregiver) at a time interacting with this person

A. Does the same care partner help this person every day as much as possible?

STRATEGIES:

1. At all times, as much as possible, have the same care partner help this person.
2. Have the same care partner help this person during the days or occasions the primary care partner has time away from this person.
3. When a care partner who is unfamiliar to this person must help them, provide the unfamiliar care partner with information about the primary care partner's routines, so that the unfamiliar care partner can help perform the tasks in as familiar a way as possible.

B. Does this person know what to expect from me?

STRATEGIES:

1. Be predictable to this person as much as possible, even if this person doesn't seem to know or to be able to tell you what they expect from you.
2. Perform a task with this person the same way each time.

EXAMPLES for #B.2:

- *Wash the same part of the body first each time.*
3. Adapt a task to this person's current desires and needs only as much as necessary, so you can keep the task as familiar as possible.
 4. If you do look different or need to perform a task differently, reassure this person and tell them who you are and what you are doing.
 5. Tell this person what you are going to do before you do it.

C. Do I use nearly the same words every time we do this task?

STRATEGIES:

1. Talk about the task in the same way each time, once you have discerned what is the best way to help and communicate with this person.
2. Avoid introducing new words. Use words that are familiar and meaningful to this person every time.
3. If this person seems bored or annoyed by the consistency of words, vary them as necessary to increase interest and stimulation.

D. Do I position myself in the same spot every time we do this task?

STRATEGIES:

1. Choose a place in the room to regularly perform tasks with this person.

EXAMPLES for #D.1:

- *Help this person get dressed on one side of the room and undressed on another side of the room.*
2. When helping this person with a task, position yourself in the same spot relative to their body and visual field each time, so they get used to where you are.

EXAMPLES for #D.2:

- *Sit or stand on their right side each time.*

E. Do I move my body in a similar way every time we do this task?

STRATEGIES:

1. Notice how you move your body and body parts when you help this person. Once you have minimized your movements, continue to move your body the same way each time.
2. Particularly note your hands and face. Position and move them the same way each time as much as possible.

F. Is there only one care partner helping this person at a time?

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that this person may have difficulty shifting from one stimulus or care partner to another. To avoid confusion and anxiety, have only one care partner at a time help this person with a task.
2. Before bringing in additional care partners to help with a task, think of creative ways to interact with this person.

G. If there are two or more care partners, is there only one care partner at a time that this person is noticing and paying attention to? (For example, are the other care partners quietly helping from behind this person, staying out of sight, and not talking?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that this person may have difficulty focusing attention on more than one care partner and may have difficulty switching attention from one care partner to another.
2. When more than one care partner must help this person with a task, have only one care partner talking and visible to them.
3. While one care partner talks to this person and helps them from the front, have another care partner help quietly and discreetly from behind.

EXAMPLES for #G.3:

- *When helping this person change clothing.*

The Communication Intervention Strategies

VIII. CHARACTERISTICS

Shelly E. Weaverdyck, Ph.D.

Ask myself:

- Am I the best one to be helping this person with this task?
- Are there things I can change about myself to make this go more easily?
- Are there things I cannot change and therefore must address in some way?
- How do I feel about this person and about this task?

A. Does this person recognize me as myself and not someone else?

STRATEGIES:

1. Watch this person to see if they seem to know who you are. Remind yourself that this person may recognize you even if they don't realize it or call you by a different name. Look for evidence that they know you by the way they act and seem to feel.

EXAMPLES for #A.1:

- *They are consistently calmer with you than with other care partners, or they relate to you in the same unique way as before their brain changes.*
2. If this person calls you a different name or relates to you in an emotionally distressed way, examine yourself to see if you look, move, or act like someone who has the name this person calls you by or seems to think you are.

EXAMPLES for #A.2:

- *If this person calls you "mother", it might be that you look like their mother when they were young. Or if they seem to be angry with you, they may think you are a spouse or grandchild who previously hurt them.*
3. Identify yourself each time this person sees you.
 4. When this person first calls you by a different name, say your name once. Avoid correcting them when they call you by a different name after that.

B. Does this person feel comfortable with me or with whoever they think I am?

STRATEGIES:

1. Look for evidence this person is comfortable. Look for a relaxed face and body, smiles, and words or sounds of contentment.
2. Look for evidence this person is uncomfortable. Look for a frown, tension, jerky movements, or words or sounds of anger or pain.
3. Help this person to feel comfortable, even if they think you are someone other than yourself.
4. If this person feels emotionally distressed or uncomfortable with you, regardless of who they think you are, then help them to feel more comfortable.
5. If this person feels emotionally distressed or uncomfortable with you because they think you are someone else, make it clear that you are not who they think you are. If that is not possible, then find a different care partner with whom they are comfortable.

EXAMPLES for #B.5:

- *If this person thinks their middle-aged child is this person's deceased spouse because that child looks like their deceased spouse, and the deceased spouse had hurt or traumatized this person, then encourage the child to identify themselves frequently, and to dress or wear a hairstyle so they look different from the deceased spouse.*

C. Does this person trust me?

STRATEGIES:

1. Look for evidence this person trusts you. Notice if they try to respond consistently and immediately to

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

your requests even when they don't understand you.

2. Look for evidence this person doesn't trust you. Notice widening eyes that appear fearful, pulling back, looking away, stiffening of body parts, raised voice, or efforts to push you away such as striking out at you.
3. If this person doesn't trust you, examine yourself and the ways you help this person to see if you can change in ways that increase their trust in you. If the required changes are not possible, then find a different care partner.

D. Is my gender comfortable and appropriate for this person?

STRATEGIES:

1. Look for evidence this person is either comfortable or uncomfortable with your gender. Notice if this person uses words that indicate a preference for a particular gender in their care partner.
2. Notice when this person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, words, or people of a certain gender. Take this person's feelings and behavior seriously and respond with kindness and calm patience. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma.
3. If this person has a preference for a particular gender in their care partner, and you are not of that gender, then find a different care partner.

E. Is this person comfortable with all of my characteristics? (For example, with my age, my size, my appearance, the sound of my voice, the language I use, my skin color, my ethnicity?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Look for evidence of strong positive feelings.

EXAMPLES for #E.1:

- *This person warmly touches your arm or face, spontaneously smiles, has eye contact with you, says kind words.*

2. Look for evidence of strong negative feelings.

EXAMPLES for #E.2:

- *This person's face is tense, their hand or fist is raised, they say words of anger or fear.*

3. If there are strong negative feelings, examine yourself and the ways you help this person to see if you can change in ways to reduce their negative feelings about you. If the required changes are not possible, then find a different care partner.

F. Am I comfortable with this person in general?

STRATEGIES:

1. Examine your own feelings before, during, and after you help this person with a task.
2. Remind yourself that your feelings may have a strong effect on the comfort level and emotions of this person, and on this person's behavior and ability to perform a task.

EXAMPLES for #F.2:

- *They may become too upset to be able to understand you well.*
- *Your distress may prevent you from being able to focus on this person enough to be helpful.*

3. If you are uncomfortable, explore possible reasons for your discomfort.

EXAMPLES for #F.3:

- *You may feel discomfort with death due to a recent loss of a loved one.*
- *You may feel discomfort with this person's behavior that doesn't fit your expectations or your own cultural norms, such as expressions of emotions or sexual behavior or words.*
- *You may feel discomfort with this person's sexual behavior due to your earlier or current experience with sexual discomfort, pain, or trauma.*
- *This person may remind you of someone who is currently or has in the past been a part of a physically or emotionally painful or uncomfortable experience for you.*

4. Avoid talking to this person about your discomfort.
5. Talk about your discomfort with someone you can trust to explore ways to change or manage your feelings of discomfort.

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

6. Change the conditions that make you uncomfortable, if the changes do not affect this person in a negative way.

EXAMPLES for #F.6:

- *Learn about the dying process and ways in which you can make this person's dying go well. Increase your sense of control over specific care tasks that help this person.*
 - *Change the position of your body while helping this person so there is less opportunity for them to grab you in a sexually suggestive way.*
7. If the required changes to make you feel comfortable are not possible at this time, or if you need more time to change or manage your feelings, then find a different care partner until you are able to feel comfortable with this person.
 8. If the required changes to make you feel comfortable are not possible at any time, then find a different care partner.

G. Am I comfortable with this person today?

STRATEGIES:

1. Examine your own feelings before, during, and after you are with this person or help this person with a task today.
2. Remind yourself that your feelings may have a strong effect on the comfort level and emotions of this person, and on their behavior and ability to perform a task.

EXAMPLES for #G.2:

- *They may become too upset to be able to understand you well.*
 - *Your distress may prevent you from being able to focus on this person enough to be helpful.*
3. If you are uncomfortable, explore possible reasons for your discomfort.

EXAMPLES for #G.3:

- *You are in a rush.*
 - *You are tired due to not sleeping well last night or due to a physically or emotionally exhausting day.*
 - *You are emotionally vulnerable today.*
 - *You may feel discomfort with death due to a recent loss of a loved one.*
 - *You may feel discomfort with this person's sexual behavior due to your earlier or current experience with sexual discomfort, pain, or trauma.*
 - *This person may remind you of someone who is currently or has in the past been a part of a physically or emotionally painful or uncomfortable experience for you.*
4. Avoid talking to this person about your discomfort.
 5. Talk about your discomfort with someone you can trust to see if you can manage your own feelings of discomfort.
 6. Change the conditions that make you feel uncomfortable, if the changes do not affect this person in a negative way.

EXAMPLES for #G.6:

- *Reduce the number of tasks for today.*
7. If the required changes to make you feel comfortable are not possible today, then find a different care partner until you are able to feel comfortable with this person.

H. Am I comfortable doing this task with this person? (For example, am I comfortable seeing this person without clothes on or drooling while eating?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Examine your own feelings before, during, and after you help this person with a task.
2. Identify the tasks or aspects of tasks that tend to increase uncomfortable feelings about this person.

EXAMPLES for #H.2:

- *Bathing and dressing, or helping this person eat when they have difficulty swallowing.*
3. Identify how your image of this person is changing and how you feel about that.

EXAMPLES for #H.3:

- *You are uncomfortable seeing this person whom you've known and respected for a long*

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

time as a distinguished person in the community, now drool while eating in public.

4. Talk about your discomfort with someone you can trust to see if you can manage or change your own feelings of discomfort, embarrassment, guilt, disgust, anger, or frustration.
5. Change the task to avoid aspects that make you uncomfortable, if the changes do not affect this person in a negative way.

EXAMPLES for #H.5:

- *Eat with this person in private and do other activities that aren't embarrassing when with other people.*

I. Am I comfortable with this person's dependency?

STRATEGIES:

1. Examine your own feelings before, during, and after you help this person with a task.
2. Identify your feelings about this person's dependency.

EXAMPLES for #I.2:

- *Notice how you feel about this person you've respected for a long time now becoming incontinent.*
3. If you are uncomfortable with this person's dependency, talk about your discomfort with someone you can trust to see if you can manage or change your own feelings of discomfort, embarrassment, guilt, disgust, anger, or frustration.
 4. If you are unable to manage or change your feelings over time, find a different care partner to help with the tasks that are upsetting to you.

J. Can I avoid letting my distress (such as my anger or sadness) about this person's behavior affect my ability to help?

STRATEGIES:

1. Examine your own feelings before, during, and after you are with this person or help them with a task.
2. Monitor your own physical and emotional health to see how you are affected by your role of care partner with this person.
3. Notice how often or how strong your feelings of discomfort, anger, or sadness are about this person's situation or condition.

EXAMPLES for #J.3:

- *Notice the times you might become impatient, irritable, tearful, or are tempted to raise your voice angrily when they are and are not present.*
4. Watch this person to see if your feelings are affecting this person.

EXAMPLES for #J.4:

- *Notice if this person pulls away from you, becomes rigid, or appears fearful or tearful.*
5. Notice the times your feelings of discomfort, anger, or sadness seem to affect this person.
 6. If your feelings affect this person, manage or change your feelings, or find a different care partner.
 7. If there is an occasion when you are tempted to physically or emotionally harm this person, raise your voice, or say words that hurt them, then immediately talk to someone you can trust, and find a different care partner until you emotionally heal enough to help this person safely.

The Communication Intervention Strategies

IX. ORGANIZATION

Shelly E. Weaverdyck, Ph.D.

Look for ways I can:

- Organize my time, the task steps, and the task items
- Be efficient, but appear relaxed and calm to this person
- Focus more on this person than on the task or product

A. Do I organize my time to avoid the need to rush through a task?

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that planning your entire time with this person and the multiple tasks to be performed will save time and frustration for this person and for yourself.
2. Establish goals and priorities for your time with this person.
3. Discern this person's own goals first, even when they don't state them or don't seem to know them.

EXAMPLES for #A.3:

- *This person may want to rest and be peaceful today because they had a challenging day yesterday.*

4. Identify your own goals and priorities for this time with this person, after you have considered this person's goals.

EXAMPLES for #A.4:

- *You want to help this person with a shower and also take them to the doctor today.*

5. Plan your time and schedule of tasks to allow enough time to get the most important tasks done, so that the goals of this person and yourself will most likely be met.

EXAMPLES for #A.5:

- *You may find taking the shower in the morning three hours before the doctor's appointment will allow those two tasks to get done, but also allows for rest in between the tasks so this person doesn't feel too exhausted.*

6. Remind yourself that organizing each task and preparation for each particular task will save time and frustration for this person and for yourself.

EXAMPLES for #A.6:

- *Being organized with the shower so this person doesn't see all the preparation and logistics of the shower, may help streamline that task and help the shower feel peaceful to this person.*
- *You may decide to make breakfast a little special with this person's favorite food and time to relax over breakfast, so this person is already calm and comfortable before the shower begins.*

7. Discern goals and priorities regarding each task. Consider this person's own goals first, then your goals.

EXAMPLES for #A.7:

- *During a shower or bath this person may want to feel relaxed, pain free, and luxurious, while you simply want this person to be clean.*

8. Plan your time for a task before you approach this person about the task to be performed. Allow enough time to get the most important parts of the task done so that the goals of this person and yourself will most likely be met.

9. Plan for the tasks and the tasks steps that are most challenging, to occur when this person is best able to perform them.

EXAMPLES for #A.9:

- *Plan to do the most difficult tasks when this person is less fatigued or frustrated.*
- *Do the most appealing task steps first to entice them to begin the task and to be better able to understand and perform the more challenging task steps.*

10. In your planning, allow enough time to approach this person leisurely and calmly to prepare them

emotionally for the task.

B. Do I plan the task steps ahead of time?

STRATEGIES:

1. Break the task down into smaller task steps.
2. Note which task steps this person can do easily and which are challenging.
3. Plan how to best encourage this person to independently perform the easy task steps, and plan how to make the challenging task steps easier.
4. Remind yourself that this person's comfort is more important than their independent performance of a task step. If they can do a task step, but are physically or emotionally uncomfortable doing it, then assist or perform the task step for them.

C. Do I do most of the task preparation out of this person's sight? (For example, collecting and arranging the task items before this person arrives or where they cannot see or hear me?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that this person might become tired or confused easily when there are many steps or items to a task.
2. Reduce the amount of distraction and fatigue for this person by preparing for the task out of this person's sight and hearing. This would include collecting and organizing task items before this person arrives.

EXAMPLES for #C.2:

- *Collect and prepare the washcloths and basins before you enter this person's room.*
3. Arrange the task so this person sees and hears only those task steps in which they can directly participate.

D. Do I stay out of this person's sight when I do those parts of the task this person is not directly involved in, so the task is less fatiguing, confusing, or distressing? (For example, do I rinse out the wash cloth or put the toothpaste on the tooth brush where this person doesn't see or hear me doing it?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Be efficient but appear relaxed and calm to this person. Quickly do the parts of the task this person does not participate in out of this person's sight and hearing. But when you are with this person, move more slowly and gently, and make those task steps a positive comfortable experience.
2. Remind yourself that this person might become tired or confused easily when there are many steps or items to a task. Reduce the number of task steps this person needs to see and hear.
3. Plan ahead of time, which task steps you can do without this person seeing and hearing you and which task steps this person needs or wants to be directly involved in.
4. Prepare for the task out of this person's sight and hearing. This would include collecting and organizing task items before this person arrives.

EXAMPLES for #D.4:

- *Collect and prepare the washcloths and basins before you enter this person's room.*

E. Do I move quickly and quietly when I am out of this person's sight, but more slowly on the parts of the task where this person sees and hears me?

STRATEGIES:

1. Be efficient but appear relaxed and calm to this person.
2. Perform the task steps that are not meaningful or helpful to this person quickly, efficiently, and out of this person's sight and hearing.
3. When you are with this person, perform task steps slowly enough for them to participate, to understand what you are doing, and to remain relaxed and comfortable.

F. Do I focus more on this person and less on the task or product? (For example, do I focus more on ensuring this person is comfortable and content than I do on getting the task done completely or quickly?)

STRATEGIES:

1. Remind yourself that this person and their feelings are more important than the task you are helping them perform.
2. Consider this person's own goals first, then your goals. Identify this person's goals even when they don't state them or don't seem to know them.
3. At all times, watch and listen to this person to see how they are reacting to what you are doing and saying.
4. Immediately change what you are doing or how you are doing it, when you see or hear negative reactions.
5. Modify the task, the timing of the task, or duration of the task to accommodate this person's preferences, needs, and timing.
6. Consider which parts of the task can be delayed or eliminated this time.

The Communication Intervention Strategies

X. PREVENTION

Shelly E. Weaverdyck, Ph.D.

Look for ways I can:

- Prevent distress, confusion, or anger, rather than simply respond when they occur

A. Do I prevent distress or confusion? Do I prevent distress or confusion from escalating by addressing it immediately when it begins?

STRATEGIES:

1. Identify and remove potential causes of distress or confusion for this person. Notice potential causes that are unique to or common for this person.
2. Watch this person at all times so you can see immediately when they are beginning to get confused or upset.
3. Watch all parts of this person's body, especially their face and hands, to see evidence of beginning distress or confusion.
4. Respond immediately to any distress or confusion, before it gets worse.
5. Identify and remove immediately the cause of the distress or confusion once it begins.
6. Get this person's attention and offer appropriate reassurance, pain relief, or distraction at the first sign of distress or confusion.
7. Monitor the emotional tenor (feeling) of the environment. Keep it upbeat and relaxed. Move casually and slowly.

EXAMPLES for #A.7:

- *Make light conversation, smile frequently, sing, or joke in a relaxed way.*
8. Anticipate and prevent situations where tension, confusion, or distress might occur.

EXAMPLES for #A.8:

- *Avoid contact between this person and another person that might be distressing to this person.*
 - *Keep noise to a minimum. Eliminate sounds that are irrelevant to this person.*
9. Prevent confusion and anxiety by creating a supportive, informative environment, and by giving this person the emotional support and information they need or want.
 10. Be visible to this person as much as possible if they are anxious, so they can feel more secure and less alone or see you when they need help.
 11. Be alert when this person seems to be verbally or nonverbally reacting in an exaggerated way to events, touch, certain people, or words they hear. Remind yourself this person has reasons for acting in this way, which might include a current experience or history of emotional, sexual, or physical discomfort, pain, or trauma. Take this person's feelings and behavior seriously and respond immediately with kindness and calm patience to reassure them. Reduce the possibility of this person re-experiencing their trauma or discomfort by removing triggers or reminders of their pain or discomfort from the environment, your interactions with them, and the task.

EXAMPLES for #A.11:

- *Other CAIS strategies sections give specific suggestions for modifying your communication, the environment, and the task.*

B. Do I apologize or reassure immediately when I see this person beginning to get angry or anxious?

STRATEGIES:

1. Reassure or apologize as appropriate when this person becomes irritated or anxious. You may need to apologize even when you are not "at fault".
2. Avoid asking this person why they are upset.
3. Avoid drawing this person's attention to their behavior or talking more than briefly about their feelings,

Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Communication Intervention Strategies

until they are relaxed and can think more clearly again.

4. Use nonverbal ways to address their distress, so this person doesn't have to process words.

EXAMPLES for #B.4:

- *Use body language and soothing sounds.*
5. Identify and remove the source of the anger, whether it is in the environment such as an annoying sound, or an internal condition such as pain or discomfort.
 6. Stay with this person until they are relaxed and comfortable again.

C. Do I notice subtle hesitations and try to gently coax or encourage this person when they are performing a task?

STRATEGIES:

1. Watch this person closely while they are engaged in a task.
2. When you see this person hesitate or appear confused, respond immediately with encouragement, information, reassurance, or praise.
3. Be visible to this person as much as possible if they are anxious, so they can feel more secure and less alone or see you when they need help.