

Environment



Shelly E. Weaverdyck, PhD

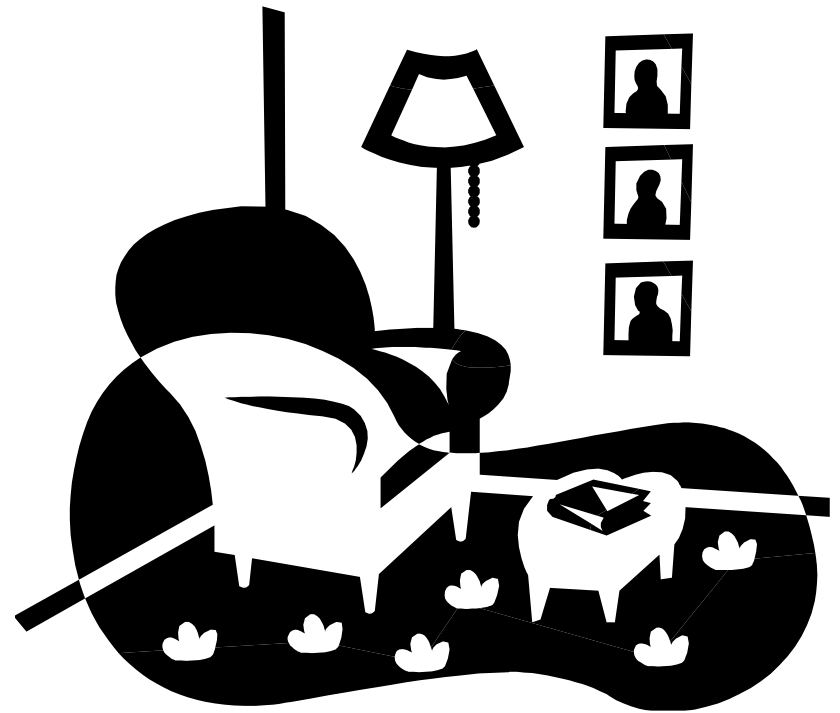
**Cognitive Abilities
and
Intervention Strategies
(CAIS)
Educational Series
Session 3**

**On Improving MI Practices
website at**

<https://www.improvingmipractices.org>

Today's Topic

- How well does this **environment** meet a person's **cognitive needs** and use their **strengths**?
- A series of questions to explore **why** a person some times communicates or does a task more easily than other times
- These questions are based on **brain** functioning and **cognitive abilities**



Environment Questions

- **Anyone can ask** these questions about any environment
- These questions can generate **intervention strategies**
- The questions generate strategies to:
 - Help with any task and communicate
 - Help everyone feel better, prevent and reduce distress and distressing situations

Ideas of Intervention Strategies

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

Importance of the Environment

- **Makes communication and a task much easier or harder to do**
- **Affects how a person is feeling**
- **Can reduce or increase fatigue and confusion**
- **Can make your efforts to help much easier or harder**

Challenging Environments

- You can make a task easier for a person by **changing the environment** or by **explaining** and **reassuring** this person
 - A shiny floor can look wet and slippery. You can dull or carpet the floor or explain and reassure this person that the floor is not wet



Supportive Environments

- An environment can support a person in three main ways:
 1. It **tells** them what to do and where things are
 2. It **stimulates** them to have energy and a desire to do something
 3. It helps them feel (and be) **safe** and **comfortable**



Examples

- **Clock** says it's time to eat
- **Sign** points the way to the dining room
- **Pictures** of food and savory **smells** stimulate the appetite
- **Music and centerpieces** contribute to feeling good
- **Non-glare floors** will look (and be) safer
- **Contrast** between floor and chair color will help a person know exactly where to sit

CONTRAST

Explanation & Examples

- Brain changes and changes in vision that occur with normal aging can make objects **blur** together
 - Shiny white toilet, bathtub or shower next to a shiny white wall or floor can be hard to recognize
 - White grab bar is difficult to see in front of a white wall or a white washcloth in front of a white shirt



This toilet
is too hard
to see
clearly

CONTRAST (continued)

Explanation & Examples

- Objects that **contrast** with backgrounds or other objects behind them are easier to see
 - Use colored towels, toilet seats, shower nozzles, and grab bars that contrast with floors, walls and shower
- Objects not intended for this person, (electrical outlets, closets with out-of season clothes) can be **blended** into backgrounds by painting them the same color as the wall

CONTRAST (continued)

Explanation & Examples

- Avoid using too much contrast
 - Use contrast only with objects that this person needs to see
 - Let all other objects fade into the background

The contrast of the window draws attention away from the dog in the chair



PATTERNS

Explanation & Examples

- Decorations can make a room look homier, but they should not be distracting or look like bugs or objects to this person
 - **Geometric or repetitive** patterns can make a surface look like it is moving or make this person dizzy or nauseous
 - **Borders or patterns on floors** can look like steps or different floor heights and can cause this person to hesitate or fall



Confusing
floor
pattern

Grab bar
and toilet
hard to see

CLUTTER

Explanation & Examples

- **Remove all unnecessary clutter**
 - Cover a mirror when it reflects light and movement and makes it appear that there are additional people or objects in the room
 - Keep objects removed from sight while doing a task until they are needed
 - Remove large or distracting objects that may make it difficult for this person to see other objects or spaces they need to use

Too much clutter. Note contrast issues.



CUEING

Explanation & Examples

A cue is something in the environment that gives a person **information**, tells them **what to do**, or **where something is**:

- a sign or picture on the wall or door
- a recognizable object such as a towel suggesting it is time for a bath
- your verbal invitation



This sign
has contrast
and a
realistic
drawing

CUEING (continued)

Explanation & Examples

- A person **depends** on the environment to **tell them what to do**
 - Are there enough cues in the room that this person can **understand**?
 - Is the tub or shower **recognizable** to them so they know what to do?
 - Are there lines on the tub or shower to help them see how deep the water is?

CUEING (continued)

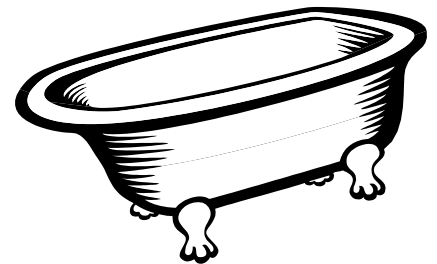
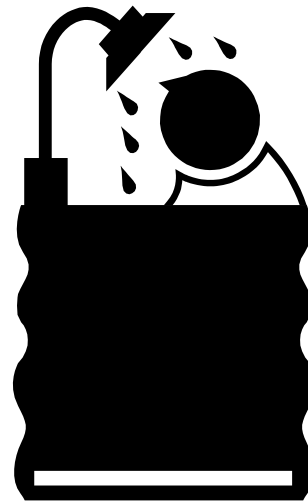
Explanation & Examples

- Make sure this person **understands** written cues that are signs and notes
- **Modeling** a task can be helpful
 - If this person is the only person taking a shower, it can be difficult for them to know that they are expected to do something different from the other person in the room
- Cues need to be **repeated** frequently to inform and reassure

NORMAL

Explanation & Examples

- Use **words, objects, and routines** that are **familiar** or **normal** to this person
- Make the bathroom look as much like a normal bathroom as possible
 - Showers or tubs that don't look familiar can be confusing



HOMEY

Explanation & Examples

Make a bath or shower
more comforting:



- The room may need to feel very hot to you in order to be warm enough for an older adult
- Playing soft music can be helpful if it doesn't make communication difficult or add to the confusion of sounds already in the room

LIGHTING

Explanation & Examples

- It is important to have bright **evenly spaced lighting** in the entire room so there are **no shadows**
- Shadows can be misinterpreted and frightening and can look like wet spots or a step

TEXTURE

Explanation and Examples

- Sounds seem louder when they bounce off shiny, tiled walls and floors
- Background noises like running water, music, and fans might sound loud and make it difficult to hear your voice
- **Watch** this person carefully to make sure they are hearing you

TEXTURE (continued)

Explanation & Examples

- **Glare** can make the floor look wet and slippery and the shower or tub hard to see
- Textured walls, rubberized floors, and towels on racks can help **absorb** both **sound** and **light**



PRIVACY

Explanation and Examples

- **Modesty** and **dignity** are important
- Difficulty with cognitive abilities can be embarrassing and upsetting. A person may need **space and time alone**
- Keeping doors closed, discussing their needs in a private room, and respecting their needs for their own space and possessions are important