

Assessment of Caregiver Interactions with a Person with Cognitive Impairment

FOUR POINT SCALE RESPONSE SHEET

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Here are some questions to ask yourself as a caregiver, to assess how well your interactions with a person with cognitive impairment meet the needs and accommodate the strengths of the person. These questions are based on brain functioning and specific changes in cognition. However, you do not need to know anything about the brain to ask them. The questions are organized under general intervention concepts that address needs common among persons with cognitive impairment.

The questions should be answered with a particular person in mind who has cognitive impairment, since each person has different needs, strengths, and desires, and therefore, different requirements of a caregiver. They should also be answered frequently enough to accommodate changes in this person’s needs, strengths, and desires. Your answers to these questions can suggest effective intervention strategies to help this person understand, respond, and feel comfortable with you.

The “Yes/No Response Sheet” to these questions about caregiving is an alternative method of answering these questions.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Observe this person and yourself, as caregiver, while you are assisting her/him with a task such as getting dressed, eating, taking a bath or shower, or visiting, and ask yourself the following questions.
2. Circle the number that most closely matches your observations during the entire time of the task. A rating of “4” suggests your interactions are supporting this person and compensating for cognitive impairment with respect to this question.

KEY:	1=Rarely or Never	2=Sometimes	3=Often	4=Usually or Always
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3. Complete the form below and record any comments or specific details (for example, observations, elaboration, explanations, or illustrations) in the spaces provided.

Name of assessor/caregiver: _____ Name of person with cognitive impairment: _____

Task(s) performed: _____

Place of assessment: _____ Room(s) person is in: _____

Date of assessment: _____ Time of assessment: *Begin:* _____ AM/PM *End:* _____ AM/PM

I. RESPECT: Look for ways I:

- Show respect for this person, both verbally and nonverbally
- Treat this person as an adult, both verbally and nonverbally
- Express love and affection for this person, both verbally and nonverbally

a. Do I respect this person?	1	2	3	4
b. Do I treat this person as an adult in my words and facial expressions (for example do I avoid calling this person “dear” when I don’t really know her/him)?	1	2	3	4
c. Do I offer normal adult objects and activities and avoid children’s toys or games?	1	2	3	4
d. Do I avoid talking about this person in a condescending way, such as “they are so cute together,” or “she’s the little lady over there”?	1	2	3	4
e. Do I avoid talking about this person in front of her/him?	1	2	3	4
f. Are my voice, gestures, and movements gentle and kind, even when clear and firm?	1	2	3	4
g. Do I help this person save face and avoid embarrassment? For example, do I avoid calling attention to her/his mistakes and discreetly correct mistakes without her/him noticing?	1	2	3	4
h. Do I avoid scolding, shaming, or bossing this person?	1	2	3	4
Comments:				

II. EXPLANATION AND REASSURANCE: Look for ways I:

- 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?	1	2	3	4
b. Do I give nonverbal reassurance as often as necessary?	1	2	3	4
c. Do I avoid giving this person information that would be distressing or embarrassing?	1	2	3	4
d. Do I give information or make a request only when this person is emotionally calm and ready to hear me, so she/he does not need to feel emotion and think about my words at the same time?	1	2	3	4
e. Do I give as much explanation as this person needs?	1	2	3	4
f. Do I repeat requests or explanations as often as necessary?	1	2	3	4
g. Are explanations short, simple and clear?	1	2	3	4
h. Do I use few words and short phrases and words?	1	2	3	4
i. Do I use concrete and familiar words?	1	2	3	4
j. Do I wait to talk until there is no other noise?	1	2	3	4
k. Do I speak clearly and in a low pitch?	1	2	3	4
l. Do I talk slowly when necessary and use pauses, to allow time for processing?	1	2	3	4
m. Do I give clear and honest answers to each question this person asks?	1	2	3	4
n. Do I answer questions as though this is the first time they were asked?	1	2	3	4
o. Do I avoid saying “no” and suggest alternatives instead?	1	2	3	4
p. Do my questions invite opinions or “yes” and “no” responses, rather than facts or information?	1	2	3	4
q. Do I let this person know how much time has passed and what time of day it is, whenever necessary?	1	2	3	4
r. Do I tell this person when a task is done?	1	2	3	4
s. Do I prepare this person before touching any part of her/his body, for example by asking permission or by informing her/him verbally?	1	2	3	4
t. Do I prepare this person before she/he moves, for example, nonverbally by touching and stroking a body part before moving it, and verbally by asking her/him to move it?	1	2	3	4
Comments:				

III. BODY LANGUAGE: Look for ways I:

- Use my body to communicate with this person
- Unintentionally communicate with my body
- Compensate for this person’s sensory and cognitive changes by how I position and move my body

a. Do I use my body to communicate with this person, such as using facial expressions and hand gestures with my words to help her/him understand?	1	2	3	4
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?	1	2	3	4
c. Do my body, face, eyes, and words all match? For example, do I avoid moving too quickly while using soothing words and smiling?	1	2	3	4
d. Do I place myself so this person sees and notices me easily?	1	2	3	4
e. Do I change positions and gesture slowly and as little as possible?	1	2	3	4
f. Am I at eye-level with this person, such as sitting to interact?	1	2	3	4
g. Do I make and keep eye contact with this person?	1	2	3	4
h. Do I touch this person while talking, when appropriate?	1	2	3	4
i. Do I model the task and positive behaviors?	1	2	3	4
Comments:				

IV. APPROACH: Look for ways I:

- 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?	1	2	3	4
b. Do I avoid embarrassment about private activities, such as inviting this person to use the toilet only when we are alone, so that other people don’t hear me ask?	1	2	3	4

c. When appropriate, do I avoid telling this person about the whole task, such as a shower, and suggest one step at a time, such as let's walk to the bathroom?	1	2	3	4
d. Do I offer options this person can understand, so she/he can make choices?	1	2	3	4
e. Do I suggest a refreshment or fun enticement to help this person participate?	1	2	3	4
f. When appropriate, do I rhythmically sing or march to a place, such as the bathroom or dining room, to help this person walk and participate?	1	2	3	4
g. Do I laugh, joke and use humor in a concrete, emotionally supportive way?	1	2	3	4
h. Do I stay calm, whatever else is happening, even for example, when we are being silly together, or when this person is angry or frightened?	1	2	3	4
Comments:				

V. OBSERVATION: Look for ways I 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, or angry
- Evidence this person may engage in a distressing behavior
- How to best respond to this person's feelings and behaviors

a. Do I watch this person carefully for nonverbal and verbal feedback, so I can note how this person is feeling and anticipate or respond to frustration and anxiety?	1	2	3	4
b. Do I watch this person's whole body for changes, such as tightening leg muscles, clenching fists, widening eyes, rapid eye movements, or brief frowns that suggest confusion, anxiety, or something else she/he is feeling?	1	2	3	4
c. Do I watch this person's eyes when we talk?	1	2	3	4
d. Does this person seem comfortable and relaxed?	1	2	3	4
e. Is this person responding positively to what I am saying or doing?	1	2	3	4
f. Does this person seem to understand me?	1	2	3	4
g. Do I give this person enough time to absorb what I say and to then respond?	1	2	3	4
h. Do I change my own behavior or the environment in response to this person's reactions?	1	2	3	4
Comments:				

VI. DISTRACTION: Look for ways I:

- 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, such as when she/he is looking for a dead spouse, or when she/he is performing a task that is easier to do when she/he isn't thinking about it?	1	2	3	4
b. When there is a distressing behavior, do I use humor and diversion instead of demands, argument, shame, or instructions to stop the behavior?	1	2	3	4
c. Do I avoid calling this person's attention to her/his behavior?	1	2	3	4
d. Do I try to discern the feelings behind distressing words and behaviors and then respond to the feelings, rather than simply to the words and behaviors?	1	2	3	4
e. During tasks, do I encourage this person to hold or use an item while I use a similar item, such as a comb or washcloth?	1	2	3	4
f. Do I get and keep this person's attention before speaking and throughout our interaction?	1	2	3	4
g. Do I reduce distraction such as noise and clutter around me when I am talking to this person?	1	2	3	4
Comments:				

VII. CONSISTENCY: Look for ways I:

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

a. Does the same caregiver help this person every day as much as possible?	1	2	3	4
b. Does this person know what to expect from me?	1	2	3	4
c. Do I use nearly the same words every time we do this task?	1	2	3	4
d. Do I position myself in the same spot every time we do this task?	1	2	3	4
e. Do I move my body in a similar way every time we do this task?	1	2	3	4
f. Is there only one caregiver helping this person at a time?	1	2	3	4
g. If there are two or more caregivers, is there only one caregiver at a time that this person is noticing and paying attention to (i.e., the other caregivers are helping this person from behind, staying out of sight and not talking)?	1	2	3	4
Comments:				

VIII. CHARACTERISTICS: Ask myself:

- Am I the best person to be helping 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 compensate for?
- How do I feel about this person and about this task?

a. Does this person recognize me as myself and not someone else?	1	2	3	4
b. Does this person feel comfortable with me or with the person she/he thinks I am?	1	2	3	4
c. Does this person have strong feelings about me?	1	2	3	4
d. Does this person trust me?	1	2	3	4
e. Is my gender comfortable and appropriate for this person?	1	2	3	4
f. Am I comfortable with this person in general?	1	2	3	4
g. Am I comfortable with this person today?	1	2	3	4
h. Am I comfortable doing this task with this person? For example, am I comfortable seeing this person without clothes or drooling while eating?	1	2	3	4
i. Am I comfortable with this person's dependency?	1	2	3	4
j. Can I avoid letting my anger or sadness about this person's behavior affect my ability to help?	1	2	3	4
Comments:				

IX. ORGANIZATION: Look for ways I:

- Organize my time, the task steps, and the task items
- Am efficient, but appear relaxed and calm to this person

a. Do I organize my time to avoid the need to rush through a task?	1	2	3	4
b. Do I plan the task steps ahead of time?	1	2	3	4
c. Do I do most of the task preparation out of this person's sight, for example, collecting and arranging the task items?	1	2	3	4
d. Do I focus more on this person and less on the task or product?	1	2	3	4
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 me?	1	2	3	4
Comments:				

X. PREVENTION: Look for ways I:

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

a. Am I nipping distress or confusion in the bud, rather than letting it escalate?	1	2	3	4
b. Do I apologize or reassure immediately when I see this person getting angry or anxious?	1	2	3	4
c. Do I notice subtle hesitations and try to gently coax or encourage this person when she/he is performing a task?	1	2	3	4
Comments:				