

# Cognitive Impairment Intervention Protocol (CIIP) for the Environment of a Person with Cognitive Impairment:

## III. CLUTTER

Look for ways to ensure there are not:

- Too many objects in the environment
- Objects and information that are recognized or useful only to the caregiver, and not to this person
- Objects that are too distracting or overwhelming

**A. Is there an appropriate amount of clothing in the closet and drawers?**

1. Watch this person to see how many items of clothing she/he is able to easily manage before becoming confused or frustrated, or before making errors in dressing or choice of clothing. For example, if this person begins to move articles of clothing around in her drawer rather than putting them on when she/he is trying to get dressed, reduce the number of clothing items in her drawer until she can more easily choose which clothes to wear.
2. Put only one type of clothing in each drawer, for example only socks in one drawer, rather than socks and undershirts in one drawer.
3. Reduce the number of items of each type of clothing in a drawer, for example, three pairs of socks rather than eight.
4. Put all of the clothes in one place, for example, in the closet on shelves and hanger rod, rather than some in the closet and some in the drawer.
5. Store out-of-season clothes and clothes that no longer fit in a space out of this person's sight.
6. Remove non-clothing items (such as handkerchiefs, combs, deodorant) from the drawers, shelves, or closets that hold clothing.
7. Bring the clothing to this person, and offer only one item at a time and in the appropriate order for dressing. For example, first offer her/him a shirt, then pants, when she/he is ready, as she/he dresses her/himself.
8. Frequently assess and adjust the number of clothing items presented. Have only the appropriate number present at a given time. Avoid removing too many items. Match the number and type of items present to this person's current abilities and desires. Have as many items and as much variety as possible to encourage choice, but not so many or such a variety that she/he is confused or frustrated.

**B. Is there an appropriate number of items served at a meal or sitting on the table?**

1. Watch this person when she/he is sitting at the dinner table to see how many items of food she/he is able to easily manage before becoming confused or frustrated, or before making errors in eating or choice of what to eat. For example, if this person begins to stack or simply move food around on her plate rather than eating it, reduce the number of food items in front of her/him until she/he can more easily eat and choose what to eat.
2. If this person sits at the table but gets distracted when she/he tries to eat, is unable to

focus on the food in front of her/him, or doesn't eat, remove nonfood items from the table, such as centerpieces, napkins, and salt and pepper shakers, until she/he is able to focus on the food and to eat.

3. Reduce the number of other people visible to this person when she/he is trying to eat.
4. Reduce the number of people moving around when she/he is trying to eat.
5. Move nonfood items or other people's food out of reach, if she/he tries to eat them.
6. Clearly define the area of the table, for example with a placemat, intended for this person to eat from.
7. If necessary, offer only one food item at a time, for example only applesauce.
8. Reduce the number of items of each type of food, for example three green beans rather than eight.
9. Reduce the variety of food items served at once, for example only chicken and potatoes, rather than chicken, potatoes, beans, and applesauce.
10. Put all of the food in a smaller portion of the plate or on one side of the plate, rather than spread all around the plate.
11. If there are too many items served, remove excess items from this person's sight, rather than simply off to the side.
12. Remove any food items that are intended to be saved and eaten later, for example, dessert.
13. Frequently assess and adjust the number of items served. Serve only the appropriate number at a given time. Avoid removing too many items. Match the number and type of items present to this person's current abilities and desires. Have as many items and as much variety as possible to encourage choice, but not so many or such a variety that she/he is confused or frustrated.

### **C. Is there an appropriate limit to the variety, frequency, duration, and volume of sounds?**

1. Listen to the sounds in the environment from this person's perspective. Watch this person to note her/his reactions to changes in the sounds, particularly for evidence of fatigue or confusion. Adjust the sounds until she/he seems to be comfortable and minimally confused.
2. Adjust the variety of sound, for example by reducing the number of people talking.
3. Adjust the frequency of sound, for example by using vibrating cell phones or discreet flashing lights out of sight of this person rather than phone ringers.
4. Adjust the duration of sound, for example by alternating loud boisterous times with quiet relaxing times, or vacuuming the carpet for short periods of time.
5. Adjust the volume of sound, for example by muffling appliances such as heaters and dishwashers, or adding texture to walls and floors to absorb noise, particularly in bathrooms and kitchens.
6. Keep or create only the sounds that are appropriately stimulating and informative, for example, bird songs from pet birds, or water running in the kitchen sink to draw attention to dirty dishes to be washed.
7. Remove sounds that are distracting or confusing, such as phones ringing with calls intended for someone other than this person.
8. Reduce background noise from appliances, televisions, radios, public address systems, and irrelevant conversations, so that she/he can hear an individual voice more easily.
9. Avoid removing all sound except for times she/he seems to need the quiet.
10. Remove sounds at night and during the day when she/he is sleeping. For example, turn off

the ringer on the phone, turn off the television, avoid vacuuming or cleaning with loud equipment, use silent vibrating cell phones, remove all public address systems, avoid music piped into all rooms.

11. Avoid using sound to create a mood when the sound prevents her/him from concentrating on a task or from hearing well, for example, music during dinner.

#### **D. Are all sounds recognizable?**

- A. Consider this person's own history and experience. Listen to the sounds present in the environment and note which sounds she/he may and may not recognize. Watch and talk with her/him to discern which sounds she/he recognizes. Remove sounds that are not recognizable to this person.
- B. Watch this person over time as her/his ability to recognize sounds changes, and remove sounds as they become unrecognizable.
- C. Reduce unrecognized sounds when they cannot be removed.
- D. Interpret or explain unrecognized sounds when they cannot be removed. Use written notes if this person can read and understand, or talk to her/him as often as necessary.

#### **E. Is there a limited number of people?**

1. Include in the environment only people this person knows, as much as possible.
2. Reduce the number of people in her/his environment to the number she/he seems most comfortable with and least fatigued by.
3. Reduce the variety of people present in her/his environment.
4. Have only one caregiver assist this person at a time.
5. If more than one caregiver is necessary, have only one caregiver in this person's line of vision and only one caregiver talking to her/him, so she/he is paying attention to only one caregiver.
6. Have the same caregivers assisting this person every day as much as possible.

#### **F. Are all people familiar to this person?**

1. Include in the environment only people this person knows, as much as possible.
2. Have the same caregivers assisting this person every day as much as possible.
3. Assist this person in the same way every day as much as possible.

#### **G. Are all notes, instructions, or equipment for caregivers out of sight?**

1. Ensure that all items in the environment are relevant to this person.
2. Remove items that this person does not see as relevant to her/himself.
3. Remove from sight all items that are intended for caregivers only. For example, post notes and instructions behind cupboard doors or in the back of unused drawers.
4. Remove from sight equipment intended for caregivers to use. For example, put blood pressure cuffs, lifting devices, and medical equipment in unused closets and drawers.

**H. Is the environment free of distracting sounds that might unintentionally elicit a response from this person, such as doorbells, phones, televisions, radios, irrelevant conversations, pagers, intercoms, public address systems)?**

1. Watch this person to see if this person notices sounds unintended for her/him. For example, when a phone or doorbell rings, watch to see if she/he glances away from what she/he was looking at, jerks, tenses, frowns, tries to get up to answer it, asks about it, or in some way registers a response to the sound.
2. Remove sounds this person responds to that are not intended for this person, for example a ringing phone or doorbell, irrelevant conversations, or tragic events such as fires or other confusing images or comments made on television.

**I. Is the environment free of objects that might attract unnecessary attention and prevent other objects or spaces from being noticed?**

1. Remove each object in the environment that draws unnecessary attention, confuses this person, or prevents other objects from being noticed or used.
2. Remove unnecessary and distracting objects from this person's sight until the objects are needed for a task. Remove them again when the task is completed.
3. Camouflage objects that cannot be removed when the objects draw unnecessary attention.
4. Remove or cover mirrors that confuse this person by reflecting too much light or movement, for example in the bathroom or on the backs of buffets and hutches.
5. Remove or cover mirrors that confuse this person by creating the appearance of too many people or objects in the room, or if she/he does not recognize her/himself in the mirror.
6. Remove objects that are large and distracting from frequently used parts of the environment. For example, remove large art pieces from doors to the bathroom, bedspreads with confusing patterns from beds, flowered tablecloths from tables.

**J. Is the environment free of objects that are dangerous for this person at this time, such as telephone cords on the floor or sharp corners on tables?**

1. Monitor changes in this person frequently to assess how safely she/he can use potentially dangerous objects.
2. When necessary, remove all objects or parts of objects that might harm this person. For example, cover electrical outlets, remove power tools, remove stove knobs, avoid letting telephone cords lie on the floor, and round sharp corners of tables or stools.
3. Put all potentially dangerous items in the places they would normally be. For example, keep a paring knife in the kitchen and out of the craft closet.