

# Cognitive Impairment Intervention Protocol (CIIP) for Caregiver Interactions with a Person with Cognitive Impairment

## IV. APPROACH

Look for ways to:

- 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. 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 she/he may have an emotional response to you based on previous experiences with you.
4. Use specific strategies to build this person's trust in you.
5. Converse in a friendly tone.
6. Spend time with her/him.
7. Smile and touch her/him reassuringly.
8. Mention the task to be done only after you feel she/he trusts you.
9. Invite her/him to do the task by your tone and phrasing, rather than simply requesting or demanding.
10. Say that you'll do the task together.

**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. Remind yourself that this person may have enough social awareness to be embarrassed when her/his privacy is compromised, even if she/he appears 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 personal hygiene, etc., and keep all other private activities, conversations, and information out of sight and hearing of other people.

**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. Remind yourself that the idea of some tasks, such as taking a bath or shower, may feel too confusing to this person.
2. Avoid overwhelming this person by presenting the whole task all at once, since she/he 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 she/he can make choices?**

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 she/he is making a choice, especially as she/he becomes increasingly confused and less able to understand multiple or abstract options.
4. Remind yourself this person can make choices and express preferences even when very severely impaired.
5. Try to be creative when discerning what she/he might want or need.
6. If this person is nonverbal, encourage her/him to point to what she/he wants.
7. List specific options available. For example, 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. For example, say, "Would you like eggs or cereal for breakfast?" rather than "Would you like eggs, cereal, or a muffin for breakfast?"
9. Another strategy is to present each option as a "yes/no" choice. For example, say, "Would you like eggs for breakfast?" and then, regardless of her/his response say, "Would you like oatmeal for breakfast?" in order to better understand what her/his desires might be.
10. Show this person the options rather than simply naming them. For example, show her/him eggs and cereal to make the options more concrete and visible.
11. Help this person feel or taste the options, if she/he is unable to see or recognize objects. For example, put a small taste of each option in her/his mouth and watch for her/his response to each option.

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

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 her/him a reason to do the task: for example, bathing in order to look good for visitors.
3. Distract her/him with another desire: for example, anticipating coffee and a donut after the bath, or eating pie during the bath.
4. Reduce the focus on the task itself: for example, talk about the pie she/he is eating during the bath.
5. Make it easier for her/him to participate: for example, by joking or rhythmically singing when walking to the bathroom.

#### **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. Remind yourself that when trying to perform a task such as walking, this person's brain impairment may make it more difficult for her/him to respond to verbal requests or instructions, or to "talk" her/his own way through a task (i.e., give her/himself verbal instructions).
2. Make use of the parts of the brain that use nonverbal processing: for example, by singing rhythmically or providing music with a beat to help her/him move to the music.
3. Walk or march with her/him in a rhythmic way to model and to perform the task together.

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

1. Remind yourself that this person will likely create and respond to humor, regardless of her/his level of functioning.
2. Use humor to make a situation fun or more tolerable.
3. Use humor to help this person feel good.
4. Adapt your humor to this person's level of functioning 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 concrete: for example, "What do you call a cow with no legs?" She/he may respond, "You don't call (i.e. shout for) a cow," rather than be able to give or understand the answer (i.e. ground beef).

### **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. 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 her/him, be calm, loving, and respectful.
5. When this person is anxious or angry, avoid mirroring her/his 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 the person without increasing or mirroring her/his emotion, such as: "Yes, I can see why you might feel that way," rather than: "Well, I should say so, that was just terrible of him to do that!"