Strategies for Teaching the Elderly

**POLKA DOTS**
- Positive attitude
- Opportunity
- Limit Distractions
- Key Words
- Assess Responses
- Demonstration
- Observe
- Teach Back
- Senses

**POSITIVE ATTITUDE**
True or false – older adults do not have the ability to learn new information -- you just can’t teach an old dog new tricks.

**False!**

Maintain a positive and patient attitude

Treat the older person as intelligent & capable of learning – recognize their expertise
**POSITIVE ATTITUDE**

Have a foundation of life experiences and knowledge

**TREAT THE OLDER PERSON AS INTELLIGENT & CAPABLE OF LEARNING – RECOGNIZE THEIR EXPERTISE!**

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**OPPORTUNITY**

- Create the opportunity and encourage them to share their experiences and knowledge.
- Take a few minutes to talk and problem solve before starting to teach.
- Find out what's worked or what hasn't worked in the past.

**LIMIT DISTRACTIONS**

- Slow the pace or instructions
- Gear teaching to the patients rate of absorption
- Stop teaching if the patient appears tired or stressed
- Break each topic into small parts
- Repeat sessions when necessary - repeat
- Give pertinent, positive feedback

**LIMIT DISTRACTIONS**

Minimize Distractions!!
KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Determine pt/caregiver’s level of focus, attention and concentration every visit

Responsibilities and roles:
- If you are setting a goal for the pt to be independent, then the family/caregiver’s role is to be supportive, not to take over
- If you are teaching the family/caregiver a skill, then their role is to be responsible to do it, e.g. wound care

KEY WORDS: BREAK IT DOWN

- Words require memory & processing & problems solving – not just words
- Easy to
  - remember
  - sequence
  - meaningful
- Therefore, each word we use may need to be explained and understood
- Once you select a word, everyone should continue to use that specific word

KEY WORDS

Key words – Don’t have to use lots of words, just key ones:

“Could you pick up a loaf of the wonder wheat bread we like and see what kind of milk they have on sale this week and maybe check to see if they have cereal on sale, especially that one in the yellow box”

instead:

Pick up bread, milk & cereal
EXAMPLE OF KEY WORDS

1. Measure blood sugar
2. Turn on machine
3. Load strip
4. Clean site
5. Poke with lancet
6. Place blood drop on strip
7. Press button
8. Wait for results
9. Read

MNEMONIC: DIABETIC EDUCATION

S  secure a plan
A  always have emergency contact and health information on hand
F  first and foremost check your blood glucose regularly
E  exercise smart
T  talk with others
Y  your goal range

ASSESS RESPONSES

- Assess responses carefully to make sure information is understood correctly
- Gear the frequency and duration of teaching to match patient's learning ability and need to know
- Avoid tests or challenges – these can create too much stress and impede learning.
AVOID TEST OR CHALLENGES

- Look for signs of stress and negative impact:
  - Take the “pulse” day to day and session to session
  - Stop or modify

- Spread formal assessments over several visits or mixed across the treatment session

DEMONSTRATION

- Show them in their setting, their world – be interactive
- Encourage the pt to talk through the procedure before trying it
- Provide opportunities for practice session
- Repeat demonstration
- Include role playing, discussion and problem solving

OBSERVE

Identify significant cultural, personal and social factors that may affect the teaching and learning process.

Look & listen – what do you see, what might they be trying to say
TEACH BACK

- Seek more than just a verbal explanation—repeating words doesn’t mean they understood
- Return Demonstration
- Needs to include each of the following:
  - Practice
  - Role Play
  - Problem solving
  - Discussion

SENSES

- Identify and try to accommodate any disability that may affect the learning process

THE SENSES - HEARING
**Senses**

- Why education needs to be multimodal
- Provide information in writing in appropriate size print and review it so pt can see it and hear it at the same time.
- Any tactile cues you can provide will give them additional information and reinforcement

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**Teaching, Technology & Elderly**