

# Partners in Quality Care



## How In-Home Aides Can Avoid Ageism- (Prejudices And Stereotypes About The Older Population):

- As an In-home aide, understand your own feelings about older persons and how these feelings may affect the care you provide.
- Approach every person, regardless of age, as an individual with unique strengths, weaknesses, choices and opportunities.
- Treat older people with respect and dignity. Address older people as Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms., unless otherwise directed. Avoid terms such as granny, sweetie, or grandpa.
- Find out as much as you can about each older person and value him/her as an individual
- Do not blame old age for fatigue, disorganization, or forgetfulness.



## What You Will Learn:

1. Definition of empathy
2. Definition of ageism
3. How In-home aides can avoid stereotyping the older population
4. Physical changes in the older population
5. How to be a patient caregiver

## People Do Not Age at the Same Rate or in the Same Way - Certain Factors Contribute to This:

- Physical - genetics, relatives
- Psychological - stressors
- Lifestyle - influence of drugs, nutrition, smoking
- Environmental - occupation, residence; and
- Social - how much money the person has, education level.

## Age May Be Defined/Described:

**Chronological** -The number of birthdays a person has had.

**Biological** -Degree of “wear and tear” the body has gone through along the life span.

**BY USING PACING AND PATIENCE,  
IN-HOME AIDES  
CAN MAKE THEIR INTERACTIONS  
WITH OLDER ADULTS MORE  
MEANINGFUL AND EFFECTIVE AND  
CAN HELP OLDER ADULTS  
MAINTAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE**

Did you know? Most older adults have lived in their current homes for more than 20 years; To an older adult a home may represent: Independence, Part of his/her identity, Place for autonomy/control, Center for family gatherings, Link to the past, Connection to the past, Symbol of position in community

## Physical Changes in the Older Population:



- **Physical Changes in the Integumentary System-** skin ( dryness easily bruised, cool to touch due to decreased circulation), hair, nail, teeth changes
- **Physical Changes in the Cardiovascular/Respiratory System-** shortness of breath upon exertion and decreased efficiency with demands of activity and exercise, orthostatic hypotension ( blood pressure falls upon standing).
- **Physical Changes in the Musculoskeletal System-** muscles atrophy (wasting) due to physical limitations, Arthritis (stiff joints, limits in movement, deformity) is common, Hips and knees are usually flexed, plus stiffening in weight bearing joints and decrease in range of motion occurs. Reason – breakdown in connective tissue.
- **Physical Changes in Gastrointestinal System-** increased problems with constipation and flatulence (gas), increase in indigestion, increased risk for aspiration (food remains in the esophagus longer and gag reflex is weaker)
- **Physical Changes in the Urinary Tract-** may leak urine (bladder capacity decreases, male prostate enlarges), increase in trips to bathroom to urinate, women may develop leakage of urine during coughing, sneezing, laughing, or lifting due to stretched ligaments.
- **Physical Changes in Vision and Hearing-** changes in vision and hearing, may develop cataracts
- **Physical Change in Touch-** decrease in sensitivity to heat, cold and pressure due to decrease in circulation to the skin.

❖ **Becoming aware of these physical changes in an older person can help you develop empathy. One way to provide empathetic care is to pause to imagine how your patient might be feeling and respecting the patient's effort to cope with the predicament.**

### Changes in Cognition and Learning as a Person Ages

- size of brain cells decrease
- responses slow down
- increased learning time needed for new activities
- fast paced instruction is harder for the older adult
- mild short term memory loss often occurs
- hard time doing more than one task or dealing with more than one request at a time

### How In-home Aides Can Use Pacing and Patience to Better Care for the Older Adult with a Slowed Reaction Time

- ✓ Slow down the pace when working with older adults.
- ✓ Allow the older adult set his/her own pace.
- ✓ Ensure that the older adult is wearing his/her hearing aid and/or glasses before beginning a task.
- ✓ Tell them ahead of time about the task.
- ✓ Allow time for the older adult to get his/her attention focused on the task or question.
- ✓ Allow time for the older adult to think about what has been said.
- ✓ Give clear, short, easy instructions that are based on what the person already knows.
- ✓ Relate new information or tasks with past experiences.
- ✓ Use simple words that the older adult understands.
- ✓ Show the older adult what you want him/her to do.
- ✓ If something has just been learned, allow the older adult to look at equipment (if equipment is used).

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