Société Alzheimer Society

Understanding Dementia

Sandra Hong
Public Education Coordinator
Alzheimer Society Grey Bruce

Objectives

- Understand dementia and it's causes
- Connect symptoms of dementia with changes in the brain
- Discover ways to support the person with dementia to adapt to change
- Identify changes in communication that the person with dementia experiences
- Learn how to communicate effectively

Dementia in our Community

500 000 +

Persons living with a form of dementia in Canada

16 000

The number of Canadians under the age of 65 living with dementia

228 000

The number of Ontarians living with dementia

3 415

The number of dementia cases in Grey Bruce

Refers to symptoms

- Dementia

Refers to a disease that causes the symptoms (dementia)

- Alzheimer's Disease

Forget-me-not
Ne m'oubliez pas

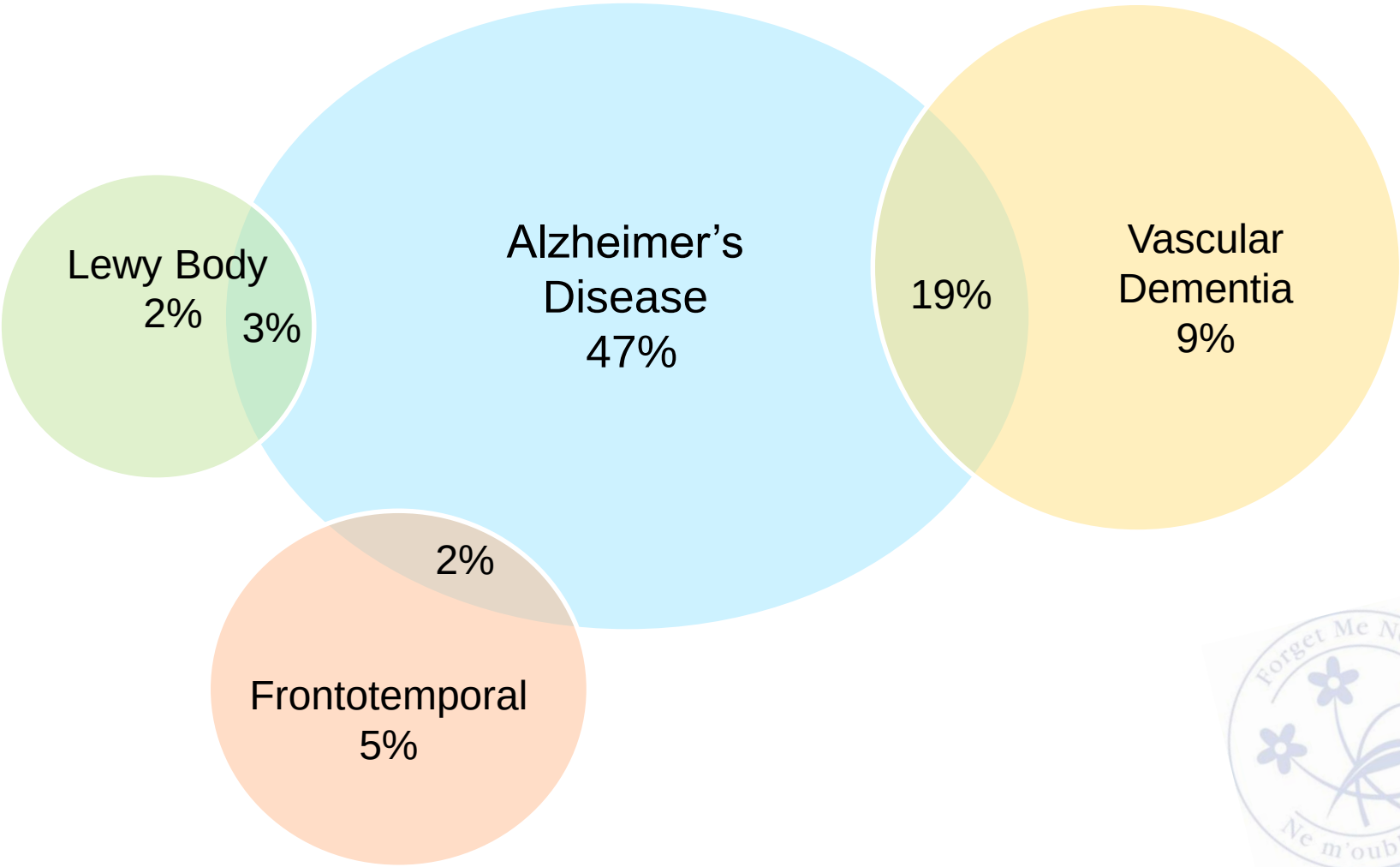
Reversable Dementia

- Metabolic Disorders
- Sleep disorders
- Nutritional Deficiencies
- Depression
- Infection - Delirium
- Medication Side Effects
- Vision or Hearing Impairment

Irreversible Dementia

- ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE
- VASCULAR DEMENTIA
- LEWY BODY DEMENTIA
- FRONTOTEMPORAL DEMENTIA

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas


Lewy Body
2%
3%
Alzheimer's
Disease
47%
19%
Vascular
Dementia
9%
2%
Frontotemporal
5%

“Our brain determines how we experience the world around us”.

Oliver Sacks

Neurologist and Author

Unique Journey

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

No matter how unique the journey…

It is vital to treat people with dementia in an adult manner

No two days are the same

Sunny

Hazy

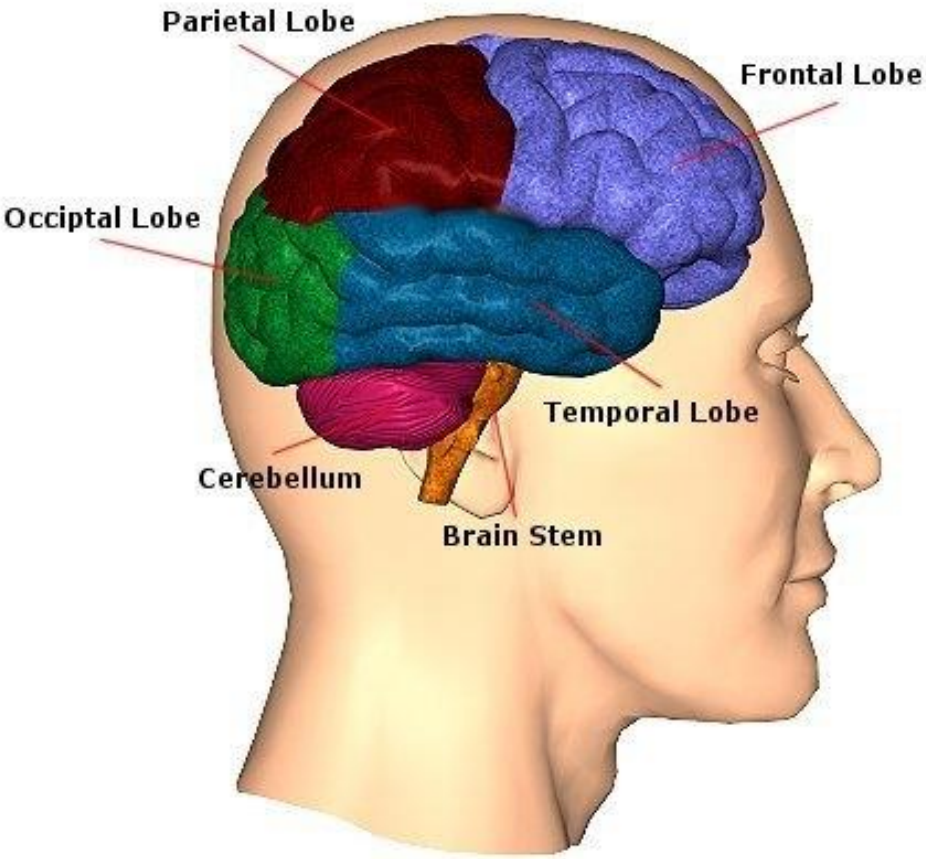
Cloudy

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

Adapting to brain changes

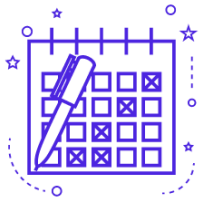
Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

Areas of the Brain



Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

Planning and Behaviour (Frontal Lobe)



Planning and Organizing

Emotional Control; Social Skills

Starting and Stopping Activities

Judgement: Decision making; Self-awareness

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

What may be experienced

- Trouble with familiar tasks
- May seem to lose interest in activities
- May keep repeating an action
- Emotional outbursts
- May say or do things that wouldn’t normally
- May not be aware of changes in abilities
- May not recognize risks.

Ideas for adapting to changes

- Use checklists
- Lay out supplies for the task
- Support as needed
- Repeat invitations
- Acknowledge the emotions
- Try not to reason or argue.

Learning and Memory (Temporal Lobe)

Verbal Memory

Short-term Memory

Visual Memory

Long-term Memory

New Learning

What may be experienced

- Trouble remembering words and how to use words
- Trouble understanding words and knowing names of things
- May be able to read but have trouble remembering
- Trouble adjusting to new situations
- Trouble remembering recent events or conversations
- Trouble with familiar tasks like following a recipe or using tools.

Ideas for adapting to changes

- Avoid memory testing questions
- Offer information, but don’t jump in right away
- Listen for the message and watch body language
- Read together-audio books
- Use routines to learn new things
- Give step by step instructions
- Share stories and ask questions about memories from long ago.

Logic (Parietal Lobe)

Logical Thinking

Putting things in order

Sensing where things are

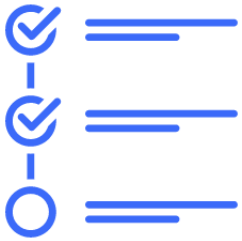
Recognition of familiar

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

What may be experienced

- Trouble putting words in order and understanding what others are saying
- Trouble with numbers
- Trouble judging how close or far things are
- May be able to do each step of an activity but have a hard time doing all steps together
- May not recognize familiar places, objects or people.

Ideas for adapting to change



- Give lots of time, don’t rush
- Respond to feelings behind words
- Offer help as needed
- Include the person in financial decisions where possible
- Remove tripping hazards
- Know that giving up activities can be hard - talk about it!
- Offer step-by-step directions
- Help to remember by offering information.

Vision (Occipital Lobe)

:

Vision

Depth Perception

Understanding Sensory Information

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

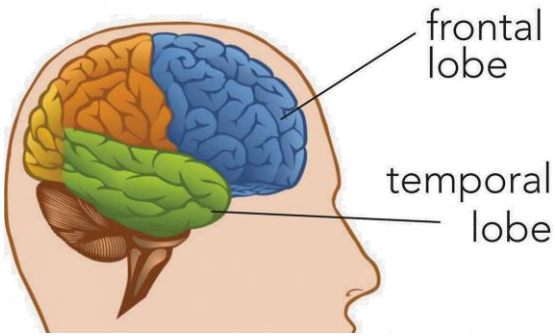
What may be experienced

- Tunnel vision (only seeing what's in front)
- May be harder to step backward or sit down
- Trouble seeing around, behind, over or under (everything blends together).
- Trouble telling how high, deep, long, wide, near or far things are
- May mistake one object for another
- May find glare or shadows unsettling.

Ideas for adapting to change

- Walk toward the person from the front
- Make sure the person sees you before you start talking
- Be patient and don’t rush
- Make sure railings are installed
- Offer a hand to sit down or using stairs
- Try to get rid of shadows
- If the person is upset, be reassuring.

Emotions (Limbic System)



Connection between behavior and memory

Controls emotions

Controls daily functions

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

What may be experienced

- May act on wrong information because memory is not working properly
- May have extreme emotions that change quickly
- May feel irritable, depressed or anxious or be overly tearful
- May have trouble sleeping
- May have changes in appetite.

Ideas for adapting to change

- Acknowledge the concerns and help to solve the problem
- Do not argue or try to reason
- Reassure and acknowledge emotions
- Step back and drop the issue or take a break
- Support the person by helping them to make choices that will work for them.

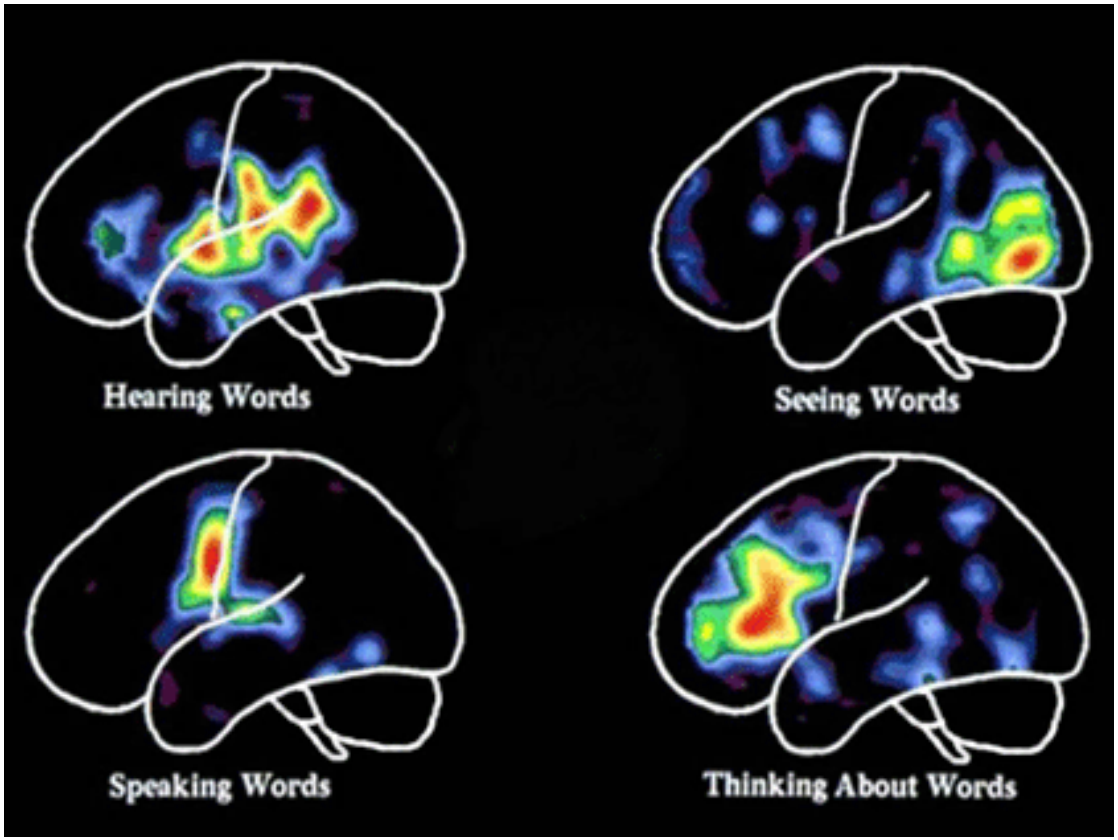
Making Change

The key is finding an adaptation that fits with the abilities and strengths of the person.

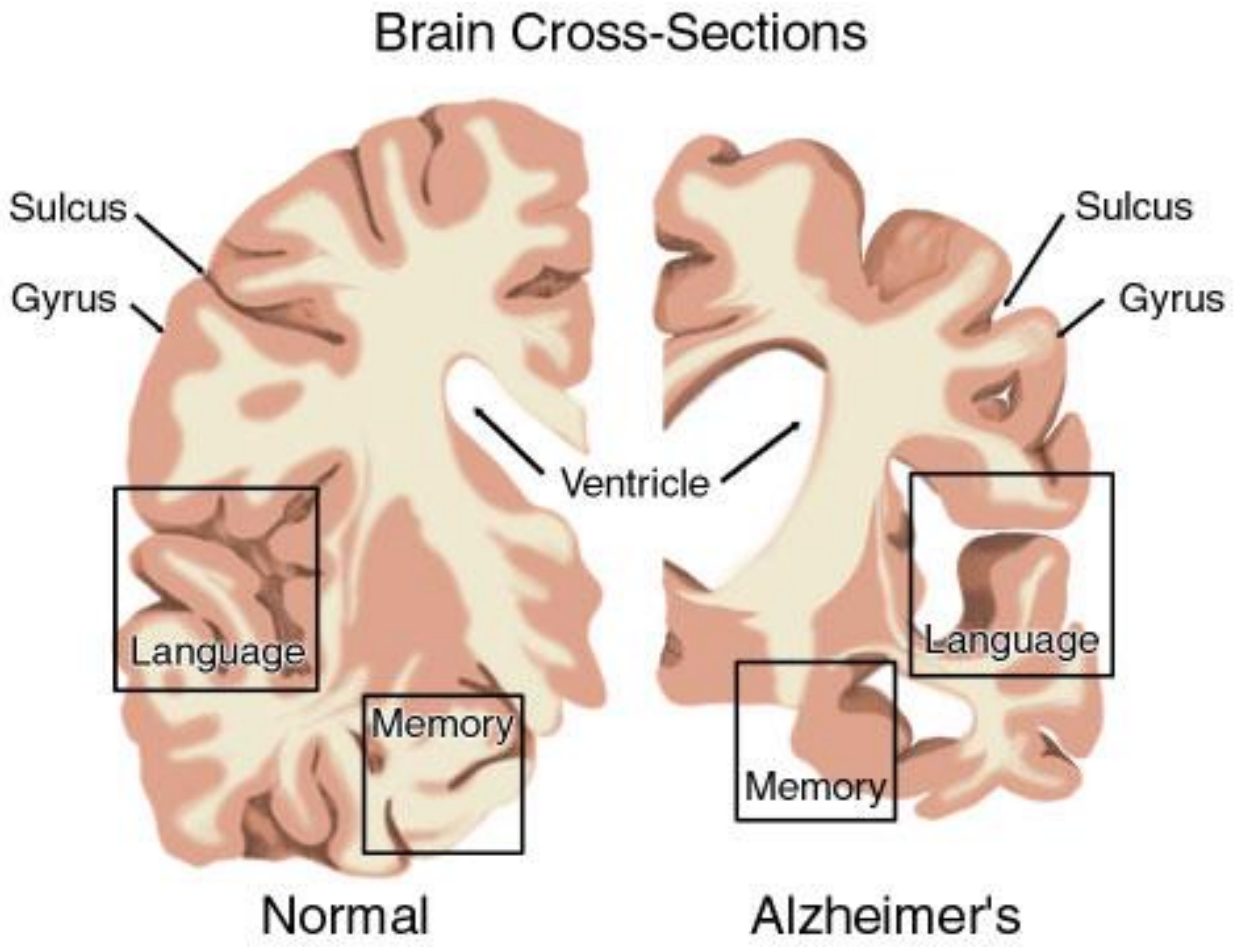
Communication Changes in Dementia

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

Communication involves different parts of the brain



Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas



Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

Understanding others

- May not understand what others are saying
- May rely on nonverbal communication to understand others

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

Speaking (Expression)

- May have trouble thinking of the right words (Circumlocution)
- May repeat themselves
- May get off track in conversations
- May say things that are vague or seem inappropriate
- May also have trouble with writing and reading.

I need something…

Emotional Responses

- Reduced facial expressions
- May feel embarrassed about lost abilities
- May feel frustrated or agitated
- Rapid changes in mood.

Enhancing Communication

- Listen to **how** the person is speaking in addition to the words used
- Pay attention to their **body language**, **facial expression** and **tone of voice**
- Look for the **feelings** behind their words
- Offer your **undivided attention.**

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

Keep your communication short, simple and slow

- Use simple words
- Reduce the number of words
- Start topics one at a time
- Be specific about what and who you are talking about
- Don’t interrupt
- Verify what you hear
- Be prepared to repeat and/or rephrase things.

Consider …

- **the words or sentences you are using**
- you are communicating with an adult, who may be trying to maintain some sense of control.
- **How you start out a conversation**
  - **"You need to ..."**
  - **"You can't"**
  - **"I want you to ..."**

Remember to connect NOT correct

Taking a moment to connect

+

Provide an opportunity to feel successful

→

Goal of communication

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

We can always communicate:

Love

Kindness

Comfort

Respect

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas

WHAT WE DO?

Memory Clinics

Education and Support Programs

Counselling

Alzheimer Society

WHAT IS SUPPORT?

A person’s everyday support group is formed by those people on whom the individual can depend for assistance

ALZHEIMER SOCIETY GREY BRUCE IS A REGISTERED CHARITY

Money raised in Grey Bruce stays here to provide programs and services

Less than 60% of the cost of our budget is funded by government or other outside sources

Donations ensures that together we continue to make a real difference

Thank you

Alzheimer Society
GREY-BRUCE

753 2nd Ave East,
Owen Sound
519-376-7230 1-800-265-9013
fax 519-376-2428
www.alzheimer.ca/greybruce

Like

News, research and more.
Sign-up for eNews >

Forget Me Not
Ne m'oubliez pas