



NC Department of Health and Human Services NC Nurse Aide I Curriculum

Module R Cognitive Changes Due to Aging

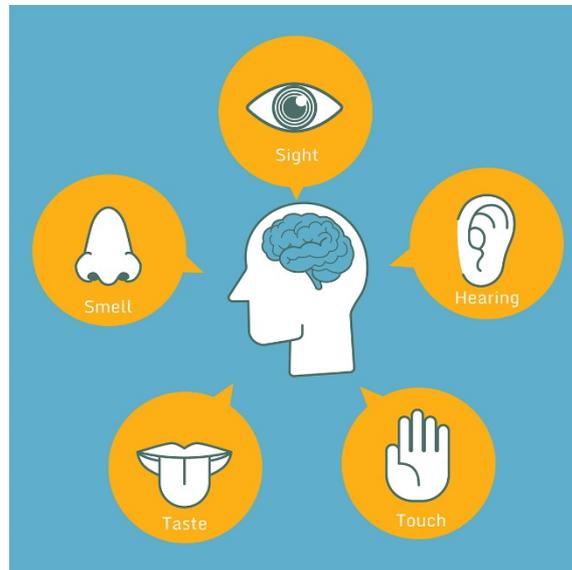
July 2019

Objectives

- **Identify cognitive changes that occur due to aging**
- **Describe the importance of pacing and patience while delivering care to the older adult**

Cognition

The manner in which messages from the five senses are changed,



**stored in memory, recovered from memory,
and later used to answer questions, respond
to request, and perform tasks**

The Healthy Aging Brain

THE BRAIN

Use it or lose it

Cognitive function is related to use

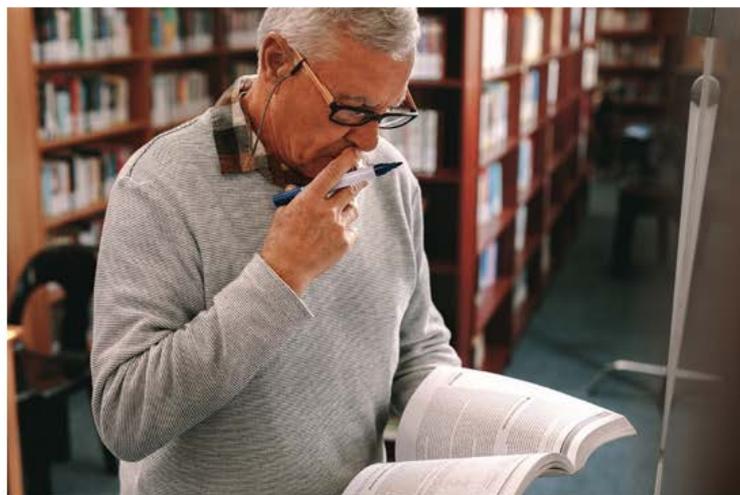
- No notable decrease in cognitive ability and the ability to learn in healthy older adults
- Thinking or problem-solving remains sharp



Learning and Memory in Older Adults

Learning – gaining of information, skills and knowledge measured by an improvement in response

- **The ability to learn remains**
- **Older adults learn things easier and better when they can set their own pace**
- **Depends on memory**



What is the definition of memory?

Cognitive Changes Due to Aging (1)

- **Size of neurons (brain cells) progressively decrease**
- **Total brain mass decreases**



Cognitive Changes Due to Aging (2)

- **Responses slow down**
- **Increase in learning time for new activities**
- **More difficulty in learning motor skills**
- **Decreased processing, response time and reaction time**



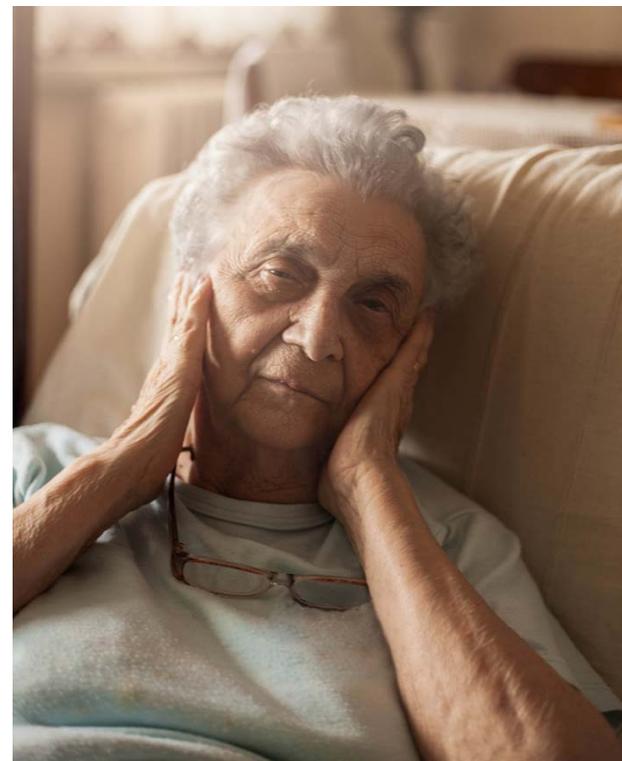
Cognitive Changes Due to Aging (3)

- **More deliberate, less frequent responses and less effective performance when pace is fast**
- **Cannot adapt as well**
- **Easily confused**



Cognitive Changes Due to Aging (4)

- **Mild short-term memory loss**
- **Motivation to learn decreases**
- **Feels threatened when changes are evident in public**
- **Difficult to do more than one task or deal with more than one request**
- **Unable to ignore stimuli**



Cognitive Changes Due to Aging (5)

Reaction time – time it takes to begin an answer or a movement after someone asks a question

- **Changes in reaction time vary**
- **Reaction time decreases gradually after age 60**
- **Impaired by aging process, sensory deficits, or chronic disease**



Understanding Reaction Time

- **Be aware of changes in reaction time and pace accordingly**
- **Develop understanding of ways to help resident make up for slowed reaction time**



Workload of the Nurse Aide

**NURSE AIDES HAVE A LOT TO DO
IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME!!!!**



**When working with residents,
nurse aides may accidentally
quicken pace and expectations**

Effects of a Fast Pace on an Older Adult

Can negatively affect older resident's ability to learn, perform a task, or maintain motivation



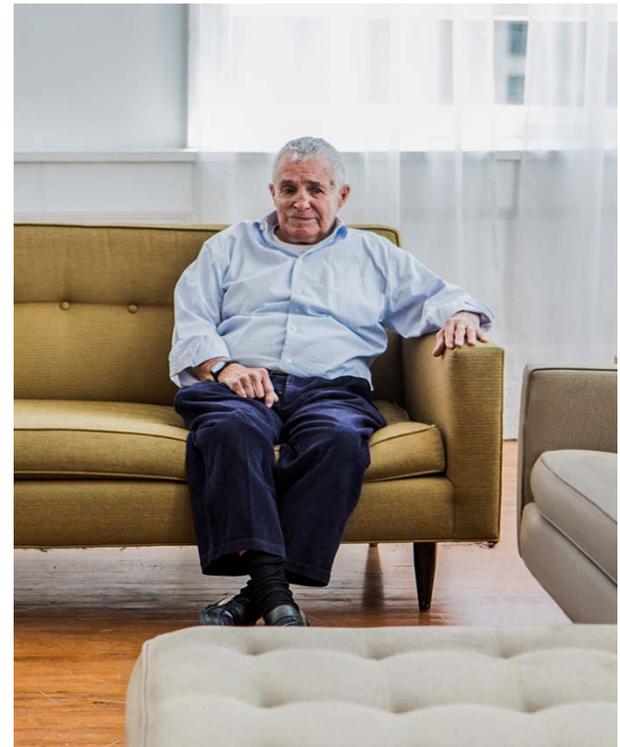
Older residents tend to be more cautious and less willing to respond quickly

Resident may be less willing to complete task due to fear of failure



Social Breakdown Syndrome (1)

- **May occur if resident is rushed/not allowed enough time**
- **Will keep quiet/not ask for slower pace and blame self for not being able to keep up**
- **Begins to feel incompetent with decrease in self-esteem**



Social Breakdown Syndrome (2)

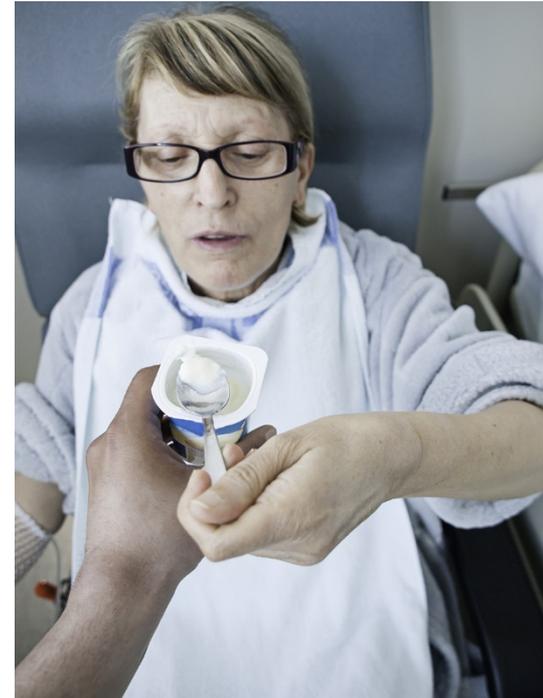
Society becomes impatient...



...with those who cannot keep up

Pacing and Patience (1)

- **Pacing – Awareness and adjustment of care based on how slow or how fast a person is**
- **Patience – ability to deal with slowness, delay, or boredom without complaining or appearing rushed**



Pacing and patience can be used to offset effects of a resident's slowed reaction time

Pacing and Patience (2)

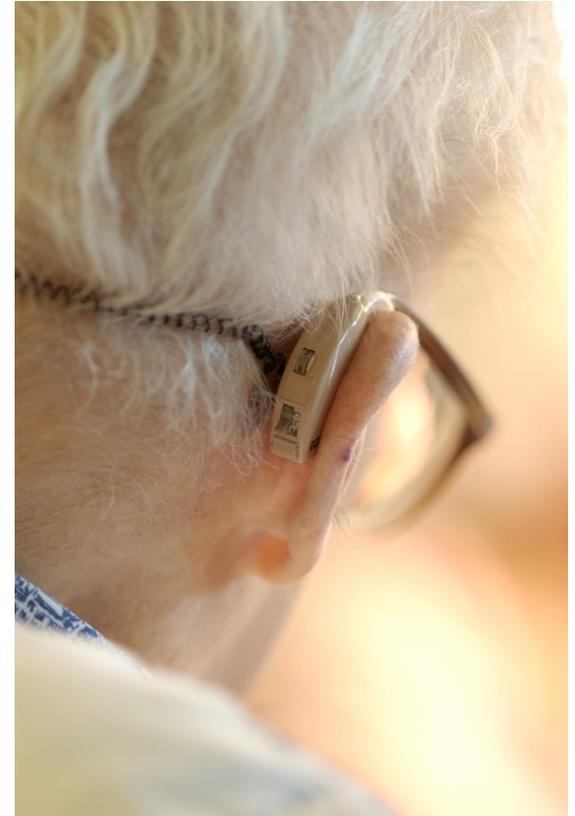
When encouraged to take time and set their own pace, residents:

- **Are better able to perform or learn new things**
- **Have time to use assets to the best of abilities**
- **Feel better, competent, and in control**



Pacing and Patience – Role of Nurse Aide (1)

- **Slow down pace when working with residents**
- **Let resident set pace**
- **Ensure that resident is wearing hearing aid and glasses**
- **Tell resident ahead of time**



Pacing and Patience – Role of Nurse Aide (2)

- **Provide time for resident to focus**
- **Give resident time to think**
- **Use clear, short, simple instructions**
- **Relate new information or tasks with the past**



Pacing and Patience – Role of Nurse Aide (3)

- **Use simple words**
- **Show resident what is to be done**
- **Encourage resident to look at equipment**



Praise Resident When Task Is Done

GREAT JOB!

