

Glossary of Terms

Accommodate – to adjust or manage; to reconcile, resolve, or get along with

Activities of daily living (ADLs) – physical activities of everyday life, such as bathing, grooming, dressing, toileting, and eating

Activity – anything other than routine activities of daily living (ADLs) that is designed to enhance a person's well-being and promote health (physical, cognitive, or emotional), self-esteem, pleasure, comfort, education, creativity, success, and independence

Adaptive – a healthy or resourceful response to some form of stress; to adjust or adapt in a way that brings things back into order (as opposed to maladaptive)

Adverse – unexpected or unwanted

Agitation – excessive body movements (motor activity) that lack purpose and are usually linked to internal tension; includes things like fidgeting, pacing, wringing hands, twisting hair

Agnosia – inability to interpret sensory information; for example, not recognizing a familiar person or object

Anhedonia – the loss of ability to experience pleasure in nearly all things

Antidepressant medication – a class of medication that is used to treat depression; will not produce giddiness or unusual happiness, but often will reduce or eliminate the profound feelings of sadness and hopelessness that are a part of the depression

Antihypertensive medication – a class of medication that is used to treat high blood pressure (hypertension); lowering blood pressure can decrease the risk of stroke and reduce the likelihood of heart failure and dementia

Anxiety – a sense of tension, uneasiness, or apprehension that is tied to feeling threatened or in some kind of danger although the source of the threat is unknown or unrecognized

Apathy – lack of interest or concern; indifference about activities; associated with social isolation and inactivity

Aphasia – partial or complete inability to use or understand language, either spoken or written

Apraxia – inability to make purposeful movements; for example, buttoning a shirt or drawing a picture

Assessment [assess] – all the methods that may be used to understand a situation or a problem; other words for assess include appraise, evaluate, investigate, analyze, or diagnose

Behavioral activation – a strategy aimed at reducing depression-related feelings by increasing involvement in meaningful and enjoyable activities; activity engagement is tailored to the person’s unique characteristics and habits, and is designed to improve self-worth

Behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) – symptoms of disturbed perception, thought content, mood, or behavior that frequently occur in patients with dementia (Finkel & Burns, 1999)

Behavioral symptoms – behaviors that we can actually see that represent some other, underlying problem

Bereavement – a normal reaction to the death of a loved one; a period of grief or a grief reaction

Brief Interview for Mental Status (BIMS) – an assessment tool used to evaluate aspects of cognition, including attention, orientation, and ability to recall new information

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) – a U.S. federal agency that administers Medicare, Medicaid, and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program; nursing facilities that use Medicare or Medicaid payments are responsible for following CMS rules and regulations.

Cerebrovascular – relating to the brain and the blood vessels that supply it

Cognitive impairment – a change within the brain that affects a person’s ability to think, reason, and learn; reduced mental awareness and ability to make correct judgments; breakdown in a person's mental state that may affect his/her moods, fears, and anxieties

Cohen-Mansfield Agitation Inventory (CMAI) – a tool used to rate the frequency of agitated behaviors

Combativeness – physical behaviors that include striking out at others, hitting, grabbing, pinching, or pulling hair; associated with resistiveness

Communication – the exchange of information, thoughts, or messages through speaking, writing, signals, or other behavior

Competence [competent, competency] – being capable or able; having the necessary knowledge or skill to manage the situation or task; a feeling of “being able to handle it”; another word for being capable, skillful, effective, or successful

Condescending – acting in a way that is snobbish and “above it all”; acting better than another person, which communicates that he/she isn’t “as good as” you are, and is a type of “put down”; other words for condescending include haughty, pretentious, and arrogant

Cope [coping] – all the methods that are used to manage the demands of a stressful situation; the goal is to reduce or resolve tension or stress

Degenerative – something that gradually gets worse over time

Delirium – sudden state of severe confusion caused by a specific problem, such as a urinary tract infection or lack of oxygen; often includes disordered speech and hallucinations; reversible and treatable confusion, in contrast with dementia, which cannot be reversed

Delusions – false ideas or beliefs that are maintained in spite of obvious proof that the idea or belief is not true; the most serious and most common disturbance in thinking; can result from any one of several mental disorders

Dementia – an acquired loss of mental abilities that is the result of brain cell death; Alzheimer’s disease is the most common type of dementia

Depression – sad mood, loss of ability to experience pleasure in nearly all things, and an array of physical, emotional, and cognitive symptoms, including hopelessness, guilt, fatigue, and apathy; depression may overlap on top of dementia, making the person look more impaired than he/she actually is

Diabetes – a disease in which the body loses the ability to properly burn carbohydrates (sugars), resulting in excessive urination, thirst, hunger, and weakness; has many complications, which can result in death if not controlled through diet and medication

Disability – an impairment, affliction, or handicap; the loss of ability interferes with the person’s ability to get along on his/her own

Disheveled – messy, untidy

Diversional activity – an activity that distracts a person, taking his/her attention away from something else

Dys – a Greek prefix that means bad, difficult, or painful

Dysfunction – the loss of ability to perform or function

F679 – the CMS activities rule requiring facilities to provide for an ongoing program of activities that is person-appropriate and based on a comprehensive assessment of abilities, needs, and personal interests and preferences

Farrington Leisure Interest Inventory – an assessment used to gather information about a person’s past and present interests; includes talking to both the person and the person’s family members

Fatigue – being tired or worn out; feeling weary and having no energy

Functional ability – the level of ability of a person to perform normal or everyday actions

GAD-7 – a short scale used to assess Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Grief – a sense of deep sadness or sorrow, particularly over a loss

Guided imagery – the use of mental images to promote relaxation and improve mood

Hallucinations – seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or feeling things that are not really there; hearing is the most common type

Hyperglycemic – unusually high blood sugar levels

Hypertension – unusually high blood pressure

Hyperthyroid – overactive thyroid; may cause behavioral symptoms such as anxiety, tension, rapid changes in mood, and irritability

Hypoglycemic – unusually low blood sugar levels

Hypothyroid – underactive thyroid; may cause loss of interest and initiative, slowing of mental processes, poor memory, and general intellectual deterioration

Immobility – not mobile; not able to move and get around on one's own; other words for mobility include locomotion, ambulatory, and moving

Impairment [impaired] – the loss of strength or ability; not functioning “up to par”; other words include disability, handicap, and limitation

Individualized – made for a specific person

Insomnia – sleep disturbance that involves the inability to get to sleep or stay asleep; may include difficulties falling asleep, waking throughout the night, or early morning awakenings

Interdisciplinary – an interdisciplinary team is made up of a variety of licensed and unlicensed health care providers, who represent various departments in the long-term care facility

Intergenerational – involving people of different generations or age groups, such as older adults and children

Intervene [interventions] – a strategy or method that is used to alter or change the outcome of a certain situation; other terms for intervene include mediate, settle, and step in

Irritable [irritability] – easily provoked or aggravated; other words include antsy, edgy, cross, restless, excitable, and jumpy

Ketones – chemicals formed when there is not enough insulin in the blood and the body breaks down fat

Meaningful activities – activities that are important to a person; taking into account the individual person's interests and preferences, long-standing habits and patterns of living, current abilities and limitations, and things that have contributed to feeling like a worthwhile and valuable person

Mini-Mental State Exam (MMSE) – a 30-point scale that is often used to assess cognitive abilities in dementia; the score may be used to estimate a person's level of cognitive function

Monitor – to track across time; the process of documenting changes in a variable of interest, such as appetite, sleep, or intensity of depression symptoms, over time to evaluate progress

Multi-infarct dementia – the most common type of vascular dementia; caused by a series of small strokes that often go unnoticed and cause damage to the area of the brain associated with learning, memory, and language

Need-Driven Dementia-Compromised Behavior (NDB) model – states that behaviors rarely “come out of nowhere” and instead are a form of communication, or a way that a person with dementia expresses unmet physical, emotional, or social needs

Negative/restrictive feedback – constant “corrections” of misbeliefs maintained by the person with dementia that are the result of memory impairment

N.E.S.T. – the N.E.S.T. model trains teams to use evidence-based recreational therapy interventions that target specific behavioral symptoms; it relies on examining the Need, Environment, Stimulation, and Techniques used to find the cause of the behavior

Nonjudgmental – withholding judgment; being accepting of the person’s views, opinions, or behaviors

Nonpharmacological – not involving drugs

Nonpunitive – not inflicting pain or punishment on the person for his/her views, opinions, or behaviors

One-to-one (1:1) programming – programming provided to residents who will not or cannot plan activities for themselves, or who need special assistance

Outcome – the end result; the effect of nursing interventions (or lack of the same) in influencing a variable of interest

Outcome monitoring – the process of documenting outcomes, often using numeric rating scales, over time to show changes related to care practices; outcomes may be used to document the need to change or add new interventions

Pacing – walking back and forth in a limited space; similar to wandering

Passive [passivity] – being resigned and submissive, and not actively participating in decisions or routines

Person-appropriate – designed to fit a certain person and his/her specific needs, interests, culture, and lifelong patterns of living

Person-centered – care and treatment that is focused on the individual and his/her life-long habits, interests, needs, preferences, values, and beliefs; the focus is on the human being, not the disease states or disabilities that the person may have, and on retained abilities and strengths

Personality [personality traits] – typical or characteristic ways that a person thinks, feels, and behaves; ingrained patterns of behavior that develop early in life and then remain stable; includes both conscious (known) and unconscious (unrecognized) patterns

Perspective – viewpoint or way of looking at a situation

PHQ-9 – the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) is a short scale to assess depression that includes the nine key signs and symptoms that are included in the diagnosis of major depression

Physical aggression – a group of behaviors that includes hitting, pinching, kicking, and other ways of “striking out” against others; believed by some to be a form of resistiveness

Potential – possibilities or options; as in potential outcomes, which are things that “might” happen

Precipitate [precipitant] – factors that cause or contribute to a problem or situation

PRN – “as needed”

Progressive – something that increases gradually over time

Proximal factors – things that are “near” to a person and likely to influence him/her; proximal factors may include physiological needs (hunger, thirst, pain), psychological needs (fear, depression), the physical environment (light level, temperature, noise), the social environment (staff, other residents), and functional impairments

Psychological symptoms – symptoms that are usually assessed on the basis of interviews with patients and relatives; for example, anxiety, depressive mood, hallucinations, delusions

Psychosocial – relates to both the psychological and social aspects of something

Psychosomatic – a term used to describe physical problems that are believed to be caused by emotional tensions that are being channeled into the body rather than being expressed outwardly

Resistiveness – pulling back, pushing away, and other behaviors that may be viewed by caregivers as agitation or aggression, but that represent “resistance” to the activity (for example, not wanting to bathe, groom, or eat)

Sarcasm [sarcastic] – saying the opposite of what is really meant in order to hurt someone’s feelings; to be critical by making fun of someone or something

Self-directed activity – activity that a person can do on his/her own

Self-esteem – a sense of liking yourself; self-esteem is the same as self-worth

Self-worth – a feeling of being worthwhile, of making a contribution, of feeling “good” about who you are and what you do; being able to say “Hey, I am okay”

Setting-specific – strategies and approaches to care that recognize the unique characteristics of the particular health care setting, including its social climate, administrative oversight, and other factors

Side effect – an action or effect, usually of a drug, other than the one that is desired

Simple Pleasures – a group of multilevel sensorimotor interventions aimed at enhancing opportunities for self-initiated activities, enhancing social interactions, and reducing passive behaviors, isolation, inactivity, or agitation; activities are matched to the individual person's needs

Situational stress – anxiety, apprehension, worry, or concern that is caused by specific life events (the situation)

Socialization – the process of interacting with other people; sharing time, experience, feedback, or knowledge with others in a way that helps a person feel like he/she belongs and is cared about

Somatization – focusing on physical symptoms

Stress [stressors] – a pressure or force that puts strain on the system; can be either positive or negative but most often is used to mean a negative mental or physical tension or strain

Stroke – damage to the brain caused by a loss of blood supply to a particular portion of the brain; also known as a cerebrovascular accident (CVA)

Sundowning – when confusion and behavioral problems tend to increase in late afternoon or evening, as the “sun goes down”

Symptom – a change in the body or its function that indicates the presence of disease; a signal or clue; sometimes the word “symptom” is used to mean the person's personal (subjective) assessment of his/her problem while the word “sign” is used to mean the observable (objective) changes

Systematic assessment – re-evaluating the person's status using standardized methods at regular intervals to monitor progress over time; outcome monitoring involves systematically re-assessing progress on specific parameters

Unmotivated – uncaring or indifferent; lacking drive; not inspired, aroused, or provoked to take action or to change

Vascular dementia – a degenerative cerebrovascular disease that leads to a progressive decline in memory and cognitive functioning; occurs when the blood supply to the brain is interrupted by a blocked or diseased vascular system

Verbal agitation – repetitive and frustrated verbal expressions of distress; includes repetitive calling out, screaming, name-calling, cursing; other terms include agitated verbalizations/vocalizations, problematic verbalizations/vocalizations, and disruptive verbalizations/vocalizations

Wandering – seemingly aimless walking that appears to have no point; may be “purposeful” (looking for something, getting exercise), or “purposeless” (cued by the environment, the result of boredom); associated with intrusiveness that triggers anger and resentment by others and risk of injury or getting lost if the person goes outside