

DEMENTIA BASICS

It's grey matter. For many people, that's all that need be medically known about the human brain. Thinking of the brain like the insides of a television set, we can remain blissfully unaware of the intricacies of cables and electrical currents: we just push the right buttons, and the picture comes on, the channel changes, we can even play back tapes. To some extent, all TVs work the same---and we expect them to.

But for people with a dementia like Alzheimer Disease, plaques and tangles interfere with reception and block some channels entirely. For health care service providers, an understanding of the inner workings of the brain and the specific nature of the disease that is jamming the signal can significantly change the approach to care, and facilitate more effective results.

For example, knowing how dementia works on the brain helps to explain why pairing verbal instruction with demonstration is more effective than verbal instruction alone. Even changed behaviours can be responded to more effectively when the behaviours are understood symptomatically.

In some cases, just recognizing the symptoms of dementia and the common behaviours associated with dementia can help care providers and their staff know when to use different communication techniques to elicit more helpful responses.

It's not TV repair or neurology, and it doesn't have to be. But a better-than-average understanding of how the brain works can make an important difference to those who specialize in the eyes, ears, feet, teeth, bones, livers and other parts of people with dementia. For those people, so-called shades of grey...matter.

To find out more about how Alzheimer Disease impacts the brain, and how to work more effectively with clients with dementia visit www.AlzheimerCalgary.com or call the Dementia Care Training Centre at (403) 290-0110 or 1-877-569-4357/HELP.

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