

# CREATING A DEMENTIA FRIENDLY HOME

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# BRIEF INTRODUCTION

## Education

- BS Kinesiology from Iowa State University
- Doctor of Occupational Therapy from Creighton University
- Masters of Health Administration from Des Moines University

## Professional Background

- Adult & older adult populations
- Health administration
- Education/education administration
- Aging Life Care Management

## OBJECTIVES

- Summarize the impact of the environment on function in persons experiencing dementia
- Identify at least 3 adaptations to maximize independence in the home environment
- Explain Roles, Routines, and Function in relation to maintaining independence

## DEMENTIA CHANGES & SAFETY

- As dementia progresses, a familiar environment can become confusing and, at times, scary.
- Loss of judgment creates potential for danger with hazardous chemicals, candles, heating sources, etc
- Loss of recognition and insight into dangerous situations or activities
- Inability to call for emergency help, exit a building, or move away from danger
- Loss of visual motor perception, aka “moving vision”
- Inability to figure out or follow directions, even in familiar places.

# SENSORY SYSTEMS

- Think about the sensory system!
  - Vision
  - Hearing
  - Temperature
  - Smell
  - Proprioception

# VISION

- Disorientation
- Difficulty picking up on non-verbal cues
- Impact on mobility/greater fall risk
- Age-related vision changes, i.e. glaucoma, cataracts,

# HEARING

- Hearing changes
- Difficulty hearing softer sounds
- Increased startle response
- Increased difficulty with communication
- Feelings of isolation

# TEMPERATURE

- Changes in the brain may cause difficulty with regulating body temperature
  - Makes a person with dementia more susceptible to environmental temperature
- Increased risk for hypothermia/overheating
  - Can increase confusion and disorientation
  - Increases risk of medical concerns
  - Less awareness of need for medical attention



# SMELL

- Sense of smell is frequently one of first senses impacted in dementia
  - Difficulty distinguishing between smells
  - Difficulty recognizing spoiled foods
  - Difficulty differentiating between safe and unsafe liquids

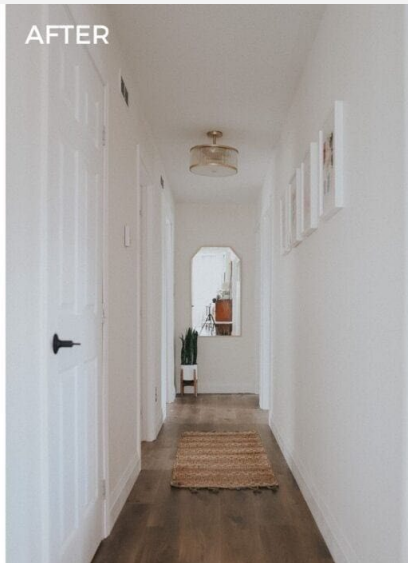
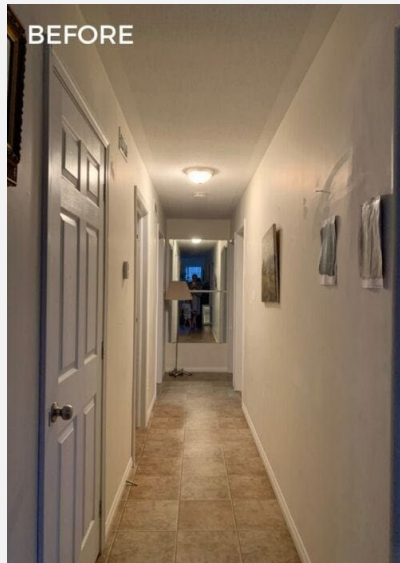
# PROPRIOCEPTION

Proprioception is knowing where your body is in space

- Impacts balance
- Impacts walking speed
- Impacts functional reach/interacting in environment

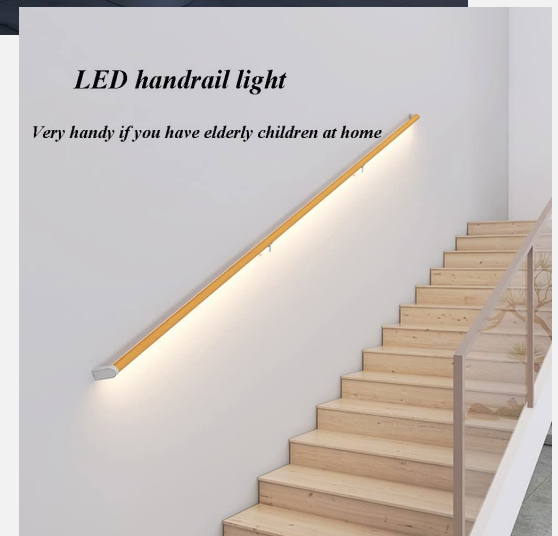
# VISION ADAPTATIONS - LIGHTING

- Night lights
- Tunable lighting
- Environmental modification



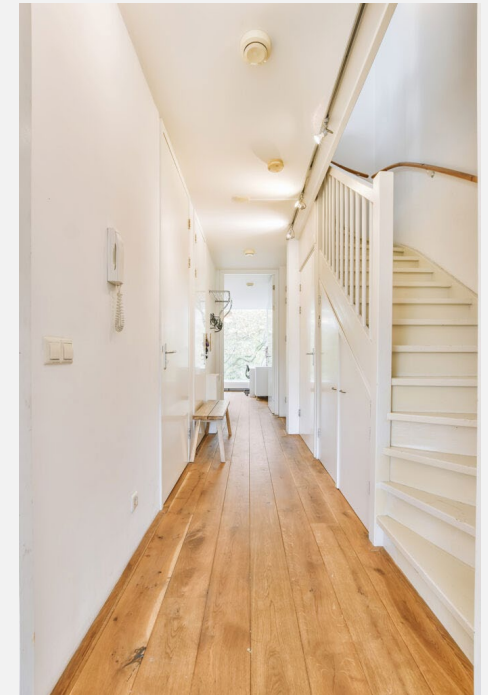
**MotionLights**

Motion activated pathway lighting



## VISION ADAPTATIONS - CLUTTER

- Reduce clutter
- Remove barriers
- Clear pathways



# VISION ADAPTATIONS - ORGANIZATION

- Commonly used items kept within reach
- Automate the parts of life you can, when you can
- Out of sight, out of mind



# HEARING ADAPTATIONS

- Consider hearing aids/ensure hearing aid use
- Be intentional about communication: mute television/undivided attention
- Consider body position when communicating
- Consider timing of communication
- Use multisensory communication: say it, write it, repeat it

# TEMPERATURE ADAPTATIONS

- Increase awareness of the environmental temperature
- Notice signs of temperature dysregulation – shivering, unexplained increase in confusion and/or disorientation
- Clothing adaptation – availability of layers to add or remove depending on time of year
- “smart” thermostat
- Plan ahead – consider “possible” needs and have extra supplies or needs in a bag or car



# SMELL ADAPTATIONS

- Weekly food checks
- Keep cleaning supplies in separate cabinet (add a lock if needed)
- Ensure smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are functioning
- Make adaptation to stove to decrease function or use of stove when alone



# PROPRIOCEPTION ADAPTATIONS

- There are not many adaptations that can improve proprioception – environmental modifications and patience can help manage the impact
  - Adaptive equipment\*\*\*
  - Durable medical equipment
    - Bathroom modifications
    - Walker, cane\*\*\*



# ROLES, ROUTINES, FUNCTION

- Roles
  - Maintain important/valued roles
- Routines
  - Understand valued tasks – find ways to maintain
  - Automate – remove unnecessary tasks
  - Maintains independence
- Function
  - Adapt activities and tasks as abilities vary and/or decline to maintain function

# OCCUPATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Engagement in meaningful occupations, or valued activities maintains or increases quality of life.

- Occupational engagement
- Occupational adaptation
- Occupational exploration



# QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

## REFERENCES

- Alzheimer's Association. (2024). Dementia, sensory impairment, and communicating. <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/symptoms-and-diagnosis/symptoms/communicating-dementia-sensory-impairment>
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2020). Occupational therapy practice framework; Domain and process (4th ed.).
- Lad M, Sedley W, Griffiths TD. (2024). Sensory Loss and Risk of Dementia. *Neuroscientist*. 30(2), pp 247-259. doi: 10.1177/10738584221126090.
- Romano RR 3rd, Carter MA, & Monroe TB. (2021). Narrative Review of Sensory Changes as a Biomarker for Alzheimer's Disease. *Biological Research for Nursing*. 23(2), pp. 223-230. doi: 10.1177/1099800420947176.