



Pain Management and Cognitive Impairment: Reading the Cues

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**“Pain is whatever the
experiencing persons says
it is, existing whenever he
says it does.”**

- Margo McCaffery

A Definition of Pain

- An individual's unpleasant physical or emotional experience.
- Pain is
 - Personal and different for everyone.
 - Hard to identify.
 - Worse when not treated properly.
 - Easier to prevent than to treat.

Why Talk About Pain

- As many as 80% of nursing home residents are at high risk for untreated pain.
- Why would we think it's any different for elderly being cared for at home?
- It's therefore reasonable to assume that the majority are experiencing pain to some degree.

Consequences of Untreated Pain

- **Poor appetite**
- **Inability to sleep, to enjoy activities**
- **Fatigue, Irritability, Anxiety**
- **Inability to enjoy social relationships**
- **Fear**
- **Increased depression**
- **Leads to other health problems**

Preventing Pain

- **Ensure a safe environment.**
- **Give “early warning” – say what you’re going to do before you do it.**
- **Reassure them that you’ll be careful and that they are safe.**
- **Move slowly and carefully.**
- **Loose fitting clothes**
- **Avoid putting PWD to bed immediately after meals.**
- **Safeguard their dignity.**

First Line of Defense Against Pain

- Home Health Aides
- Family Members
- CNA's
- Nurses
- Dietary Aides
- Activity Directors

Our Responsibility Entails:

- **Be aware of the possibility that the person may be having pain.**
- **Identify the words and behaviors each PWD uses to communicate pain (ask, listen, observe).**
- **Locate the source of the pain.**

Responding to Pain

- **Acknowledge it**
- **Take Action**
- **Distraction**

Remember...

**Kindness and gentleness
go a long way to
ameliorating pain of any
sort.**

**Thank You
and
Have a good day.**