



Evidenced-based communication strategies that support person-centered dementia care

Marie Y. Savundranayagam, PhD

*Associate Professor, School of Health Studies, Western Unive
Director, Sam Katz Community Health and Aging Research U
Co-Lead of Conversation Study, Team 17
Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging*

TEAM 17:
Interventions at the sensory-
cognitive interface



ÉQUIPE 17 :
Les interventions dans les
interactions sensorielles at
cognitives

Western 



Sam Katz
Community Health &
Aging Research Unit

Learning Objectives



01 Components of person-centered communication



02 Strategies supporting person-centered care

- Language-based
- Nonverbal



03 Be EPIC training



Communication Matters





Person-Centered Communication

RECOGNITION

NEGOTIATION

FACILITATION

VALIDATION

4 Person-Centered Communication Strategies - RECOGNITION



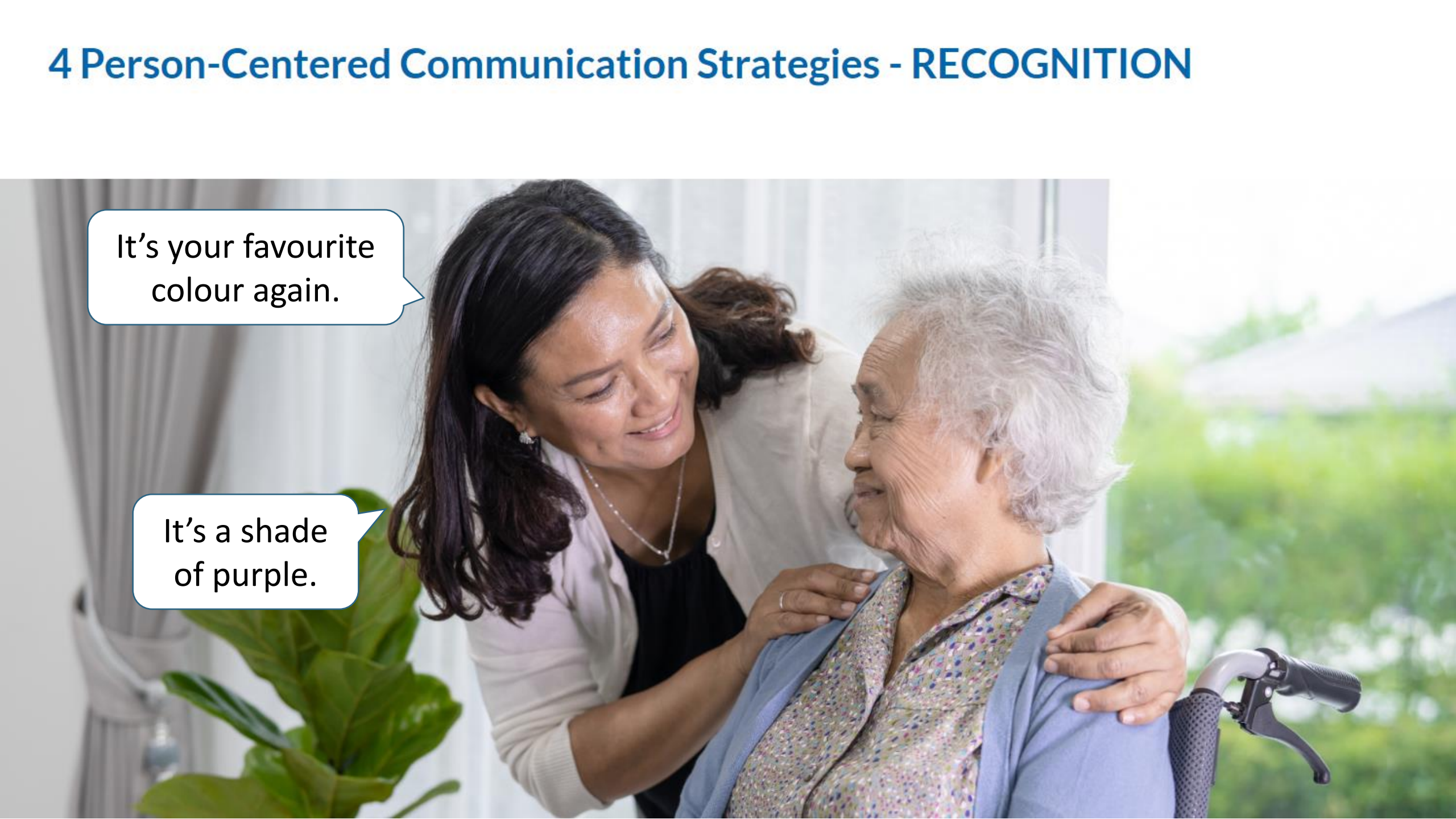
Recognition involves **acknowledging** the person living with dementia as a person, **affirming** them uniquely, **calling** them by name, and **incorporating** their life story in conversation.

Humour with appropriate tone of voice may also be an example of recognition as it highlights the shared relationship between the care provider and person living with dementia.

(Kitwood, 1997)

CONTINUE

4 Person-Centered Communication Strategies - RECOGNITION



It's your favourite colour again.

It's a shade of purple.



Person-Centered Communication

RECOGNITION

NEGOTIATION

FACILITATION

VALIDATION

4 Person-Centered Communication Strategies - NEGOTIATION




Negotiation involves **consulting** with the person living with dementia on their preferences, desires, and needs.

Negotiation also includes **confirming** whether they correctly understood the client's needs.

(Kitwood, 1997)

CONTINUE

4 Person-Centered Communication Strategies - NEGOTIATION



So would you like to get up today?

No.

Yeah, just a few more minutes.

Ah, you'd rather stay in bed?



Person-Centered Communication

RECOGNITION

NEGOTIATION

FACILITATION

VALIDATION

4 Person-Centered Communication Strategies - FACILITATION




Facilitation involves **working together** with the person living with dementia, **involving** their abilities in a shared task, and **filling in** the missing parts of a task/action.

It also includes **asking** the person living with dementia about their life, their thoughts, and experiences to find out more about them.

(Kitwood, 1997)

CONTINUE

4 Person-Centered Communication Strategies - FACILITATION



Oh, you have a lovely picture here!

What's that picture about?

Ah... that's our family... annual family reunion. Um, everyone pitches in and... um, um, brings a dish to share.

4 Person-Centered Communication Strategies - FACILITATION



I need coffee.

I'm gonna make sure you get some then.



Person-Centered Communication

RECOGNITION

NEGOTIATION

FACILITATION

VALIDATION

4 Person-Centered Communication Strategies - VALIDATION



Validation involves **acknowledging** the feelings of the person living with dementia and **providing a response** on the feelings level.

Using empathy and understanding, responding sensitively, anticipating a need, and complimenting the person living with dementia are instances of validation observed during interactions.

(Kitwood, 1997)

CONTINUE

4 Person-Centered Communication Strategies - VALIDATION



I always get lost
in this place.

Oh I would never
let you be lost.

No... you
wouldn't.

Common Communication Difficulties during Care of Persons Living with Dementia



Difficulties with understanding



Difficulties with expression



Other interactional difficulties

CONTINUE

Common Communication Difficulties during Care of Persons Living with Dementia



Difficulties with understanding



Difficulties with expression



Other interactional difficulties

CONTINUE

- Initial difficulty understanding complex sentences
- Difficulty following complex instructions
- Slower in processing speech



Facilitating Understanding

Language-Based Strategies

Strategy	Example
Allow time to respond (Orange, 2001; Sabat, 1991): Give time for your client/resident to complete their thoughts without interruption.	<i>"If I were going on a... (4.4 sec) a, let's use the... (4.8 sec) time thing".</i>
Verbatim Repetition (Small <i>et al.</i> , 1997; Watson <i>et al.</i> , 1999; Wilson <i>et al.</i> , 2012): Repeat word for word your previous statement to facilitate understanding.	Care provider: <i>These are some cute pants.</i> Client: <i>What?</i> Care provider: <i>These are some cute pants.</i>
Rephrase (Small, Kemper, and Lyons, 1997; Tappen <i>et al.</i> , 1997; Watson <i>et al.</i> , 1999; Wilson <i>et al.</i> , 2012): Change the structure of your previous statement to add clarity and help your client/resident with understanding.	Care provider: <i>Well, these are sleeping socks.</i> Client: <i>They're what?</i> Care provider: <i>Socks that you wear in the bed, sleep in</i>



Facilitating Understanding

Language-Based Strategies

Strategy	Example
<p>Use Right-Branching Sentences (Kemper & Harden, 1999): Subject/verb appears at or near the beginning of the sentence.</p>	<p>“You can get dressed before having breakfast.” [Avoid left-branching sentences: “Before having breakfast, you can get dressed”.]</p>
<p>Place modifiers after verbs: Modifiers can be adverbs that add a specific meaning to another word/sentence. They should appear after the verb is introduced.</p>	<p>“Walk slowly with me.” [Avoid modifiers before verbs: “Slowly walk with me”.]</p>

Common Communication Difficulties during Care of Persons Living with Dementia



Difficulties with understanding



Difficulties with expression



Other interactional difficulties

CONTINUE

- Word finding problems
- Limited contribution to conversations.
- Difficulty staying on topic and continuing conversations.
- Longer respond time required



Facilitating Expression

Language-Based Strategies

Strategy	Example
<p>Allow time to respond (Orange, 2001; Sabat, 1991): Give time for your client/resident to complete their thoughts without interruption.</p>	<p><i>"If I were going on a... (4.4 sec) a, let's use the... (4.8 sec) time thing."</i></p>
<p>Unfinished sentences prompt (Santo Pietro & Ostuni, 2003): Use unfinished sentences that your client/resident is encouraged to complete.</p>	<p><i>"Let me see, your daughter's name is _____."</i></p>
<p>Fill in missing information (Savundranayagam & Orange, 2014): Provide missing information like a word or content to enable and encourage your client/resident to continue the conversation. *Do not overuse this strategy; use unfinished sentence prompt first.</p>	<p><i>Client: And I wait until the um...</i> <i>Care provider: Roots.</i> <i>Client: Roots grow.</i> <i>Client: And then I planted it.</i></p>



Facilitating Expression

Language-Based Strategies

Strategy	Example
<p>Newsmarks (Ramanathan, 1997): Show interest by emphasizing the importance of your client's or resident's statement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Really?”, “My goodness”, “Oh yeah?”• Partial repeat of previous statement: “She did?”
<p>Affirmations (Ramanathan, 1997; Santo Pietro & Ostuni, 2003): Agree or acknowledge your client/resident's emotions and feelings.</p>	<p>Minimal turn: “I'm sure”, “Yes”, “I see!”, “I understand.”</p>
<p>Matching comments (Santo Pietro and Ostuni, 2003): Respond to a client/resident's comment with words that are the same/similar. You can add your opinion or share personal experiences.</p>	<p>Client: <i>I love red roses.</i></p> <p>Care provider: <i>You love red roses? My favorite flowers are tigerlilies. I plant them every spring.</i></p>



Facilitating Expression

Language-Based Strategies

Strategy	Example
<p>Open leads (Tappen et al., 1997):</p> <p>Initiate a conversation with broad openings or topic. This allows conversation to be guided towards topics of interest or importance</p> <p>*There is no 'correct' response.</p>	<p><i>"Tell me how you are feeling today."</i></p>
<p>Focused leads (Tappen et al., 1997):</p> <p>Initiate a conversation by guiding towards a specific topic, subject, or direction.</p>	<p><i>"Tell me more about your grandchildren."</i></p> <p><i>"I'd love to hear more about your favourite Christmas songs".</i></p>



Facilitating Expression

Language-Based Strategies

Strategy	Example
<p>Open-ended questions (Ripich et al., 1999; Small et al., 2003): Ask for a description, explanation, or opinion that require an answer of more than one word Note: rely on memory for words vs. time-related.</p>	<p><i>“What do you like about this painting?”</i></p> <p>[Avoid: “When was the last time you went to a concert?”]</p>
<p>Choice Questions (Hamilton, 1994, Orange, 2001, Small & Perry, 2005): Provide options. This supports independence by respecting preferences, desires, and needs. Note: rely on memory for words vs time-related.</p>	<p><i>“Would you like fried rice or pasta?”</i></p>
<p>Yes/No questions (Hamilton, 1994, Orange, 2001, Small & Perry, 2005): Requires a confirmation or denial response. Helps get quick information from a person. Note: rely on memory for words vs time-related.</p>	<p><i>“Are you thirsty?”</i></p> <p><i>“Do you want rice for dinner?”</i></p> <p>[Avoid: “Did you see the dentist yesterday?”]</p>

Common Communication Difficulties during Care of Persons Living with Dementia



Difficulties with understanding



Difficulties with expression



Other interactional difficulties

CONTINUE

- Conversation breakdowns
- Gaps in mutual understanding
- Refusal of care



Addressing Misunderstandings

Language-Based Strategies

Strategies to <u>Confirm Understanding</u>	Example
<p>Ask for clarification (Watson, <i>et al.</i>, 1999): Add what you understood and check if the client/resident agrees. This can be phrased as a choice.</p>	<p><i>"Oh, you mean...?"</i> <i>"Do you mean the red shirt or the green shirt?"</i></p>
<p>Inform what was misunderstood (Savundranayagam & Orange, 2014): Use statements that inform your client/resident what you misunderstood exactly.</p>	<p><i>"I don't understand what ____ means"</i> <i>"Can you explain what you mean by ____?"</i></p>
<p>Restate what other person said (Sabat, 1991; 2001; Ramanathan, 1997; Tappen <i>et al.</i>, 1997; Orange, 2001): Summarize what your client/ resident said. Highlight what is important.</p>	<p><i>"Let me see if I can understand: ..."</i></p>



Addressing Misunderstandings

Language-Based Strategies

Strategies	Example
Ask the other person to repeat what was said (Savundranayagam & Orange, 2014):	<i>“Can you repeat that?”</i>
Give more information (Savundranayagam & Orange, 2014): Add new information to your previous statement to support understanding.	Care provider: I got it. Client: I don’t remember ever having them. Care provider: That’s from Eva. I went to get it. Client Oh, you went to get it. Care provider: Yup.



Addressing Misunderstandings

Language-Based Strategies

Strategies

Fill in missing information (Savundranayagam & Orange, 2014):

Provide missing information like a word or content to enable and encourage your client/resident to continue the conversation.

*Do not overuse this strategy; use unfinished sentence prompt first.

Rephrase (Small, Kemper, and Lyons, 1997; Tappen *et al.*, 1997; Watson *et al.*, 1999; Wilson *et al.*, 2012):

Change the structure of your previous statement to add clarity and help your client/resident with understanding.

Verbatim Repetition (Small *et al.*, 1997; Watson *et al.*, 1999; Wilson *et al.*, 2012):

Repeat word for word your previous statement to facilitate understanding.



Addressing Misunderstandings

Language-Based Strategies

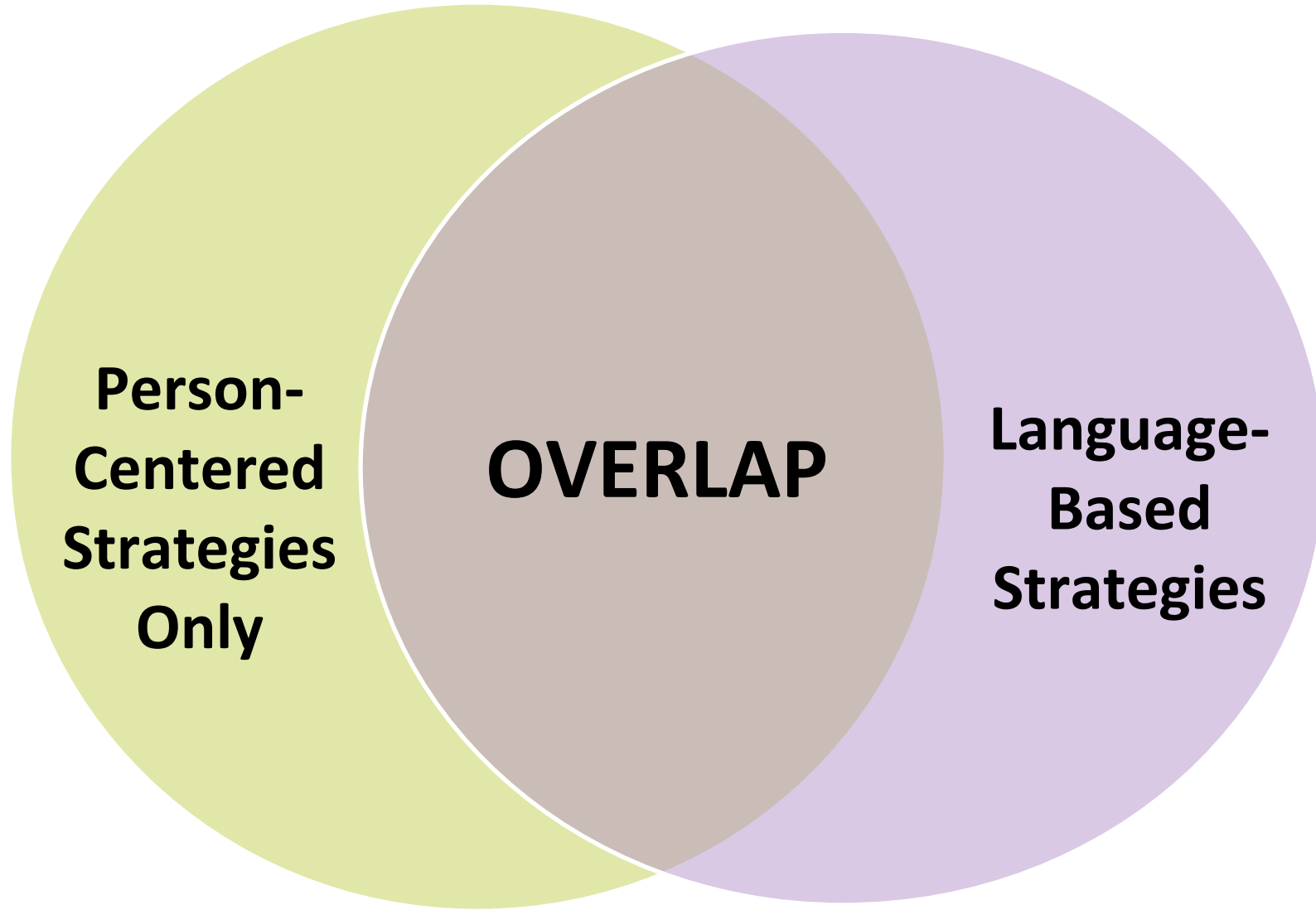
Strategy	Example
Ask for permission (O'Brien et al., 2020; Weitzel et al., 2011): Helps prepare your client/resident for the steps that will follow by asking for their permission.	<i>"Mrs. Mehta, may I please comb your hair?"</i> <i>"I need to help you move to the other chair. Is that alright?"</i>
Announce activity or intent (Sabat, 1991): Inform your client/resident before starting a new activity, or a next step, or about a topic change.	<i>"Now I'm going to help with ____."</i> <i>"You finished with this puzzle, great. Next will be ____."</i>
Use politeness (Medvene and Lann-Wolcott, 2010). Be friendly and respectful, show interest, accept feelings, or compliment.	<i>"Can you please help me by holding this towel while I comb your hair?"</i>
Affirmations (Ramanathan, 1997; Santo Pietro and Ostuni, 2003): Agree or acknowledge your client/resident's emotions and feelings.	Soften the directness of a request: <i>"I know, I know, you don't like to have your hair combed. Please hold on for a minute. That's it. I'm almost done".</i> Express your intention to fulfill a request: <i>"I will do that for you".</i>



General Strategies

Language-Based Strategies

Strategy	Example
<p>Greeting (Bourgeois <i>et al.</i>, 2004; Kim & Bayles, 2007):</p> <p>Using the preferred name when greeting your client or resident recognize the uniqueness of each person.</p>	<p><i>“Good morning, Mrs. Richardson!”</i></p>
<p>Address by name and/or title (Kim & Bayles, 2007; Weitzel <i>et al.</i>, 2011):</p> <p>Addressing your client/resident by their preferred name and/or title during you care activity can help raising attention.</p>	<p><i>“That’s beautiful, Mr. Patel.”</i></p> <p><i>“Oh, you are looking so handsome today, Bernie.”</i></p>
<p>Introducing yourself and your role (Bourgeois <i>et al.</i>, 2004; Weitzel <i>et al.</i>, 2011):</p> <p>This helps your client/resident to get oriented.</p>	<p><i>“Good afternoon, Ms. Zhang. My name is _____. I’m your care provider today”</i></p> <p>Avoid: <i>“Do you remember me?”</i></p>



**Person-
Centered
Strategies
Only**

OVERLAP

**Language-
Based
Strategies**



Recognition

Client with dementia: But my daughter and her husband likes the way>

Client with dementia: She likes camping.

[...]

Client with dementia: Everyday he wanted to come home to sleep.

Personal Support Worker: Is that Lucy's husband? [Recognition]

[Yes/No Question]

Client with dementia: Huh?

Personal Support Worker: Lucy's husband? [Recognition] [Paraphrased Repetition; Yes/No Question]

Client with dementia: Yah.



Negotiation

Staff: Here are some socks so your feet will be warm. [Facilitation]

Staff: You want something nice and warm on? [Negotiation] [Yes/No Question]

Resident: Yes, I do.

Resident: I don't like to be cold.

Staff: Here, feel your face.

Staff: You wanna shave? [Negotiation] [Yes/No Question]

[4 second pause]

Staff: You want me to shave you? [Negotiation] [Rephrase] [Yes/No Question]

Resident: No.



Facilitation

Resident: Does it hurt?

Staff: I dunno, it's not supposed to hurt to use the bathroom.

[Facilitation] [Affirmation –Softening]

Resident: Okay.

Staff: How was your breakfast, Fred? [Facilitation] [Open-ended question]

Resident: Oh. It was good this morning.

Staff: That's good. [Validation]



Validation

Client: I always get lost in this place.

Staff: oh I would never let you be lost. [Validation] [Affirmation]

Client: No, you wouldn't.

Using nonverbal behaviours to support person-centered communication

Examples of helpful nonverbal communication strategies that can be used in combination with the four person-centered communication strategies.



Gaze



Facial expression



Gestures



Touch




Body position

CONTINUE

Using nonverbal behaviours to support person-centered communication



Gestures

- Often used with **Facilitation** or **Negotiation**
- Pointing or showing objects, nod, use own body for **[negotiation]**
[open-ended Q, Yes/No Q]
- Examples: 
 - Care Provider : “Which shirt would you like?” [Client: sitting on the bed; looking at shirts hung on the door, Care Provider : looking at Client’s face; points between both shirts]
[Negotiation supported using directed gaze; Gesture with object]
 - Client: “I like this...umm... b-b-b-...the one” [looking at shirts on the door, Care Provider : looking at Client’s face; reaches for the blue shirt]
 - Care Provider : “Do you mean the blue one?” [Care Provider : takes the blue shirt off the hanger, and holds it out toward the client while facing the client]
[Facilitation supported using Gesture with object]
[facilitation]
[ask for clarification, Yes/No Q]
 - Client: “Yes” [Client: looking at shirt and smiles]



Environment



Person-centered
communication



I matter



Client's abilities and
preferences

Savundranayagam, M.Y., Basque, S. R., & Johnson, K. (2020). Feasibility of Be EPIC: A dementia-focused person-centered communication intervention for home care workers. *Clinical Gerontologist*, 43(2): 181-192. DOI: [10.1080/07317115.2019.1694116](https://doi.org/10.1080/07317115.2019.1694116)



Sam Katz
Community Health &
Aging Research Unit



Lessons Learned

About Enhancing Dementia Care via Be EPIC

Applying Newly Learned Skills to Home Care Clients:

*"I was making great progress with clients I had been **practicing** on. So I'd learn in class and then I'd go and practice on certain clients...and it's like it was working much better."*

Realistic Simulations:

*"Some of the scenarios that we went through, I've **definitely seen and have experienced** for sure"*

*"For me this course, you know, from learning about dementia and everything in school, and then I was fortunate to have a neighbor with dementia... and **this was the best training I could have ever had.**"*

Interactive Training:

*"I think it was excellent that **we learned, and then we applied.** We learned and then we applied so I think that's very important that what you learn is what you apply as soon as possible **so it registers. And the whole course was set up that way!**"*

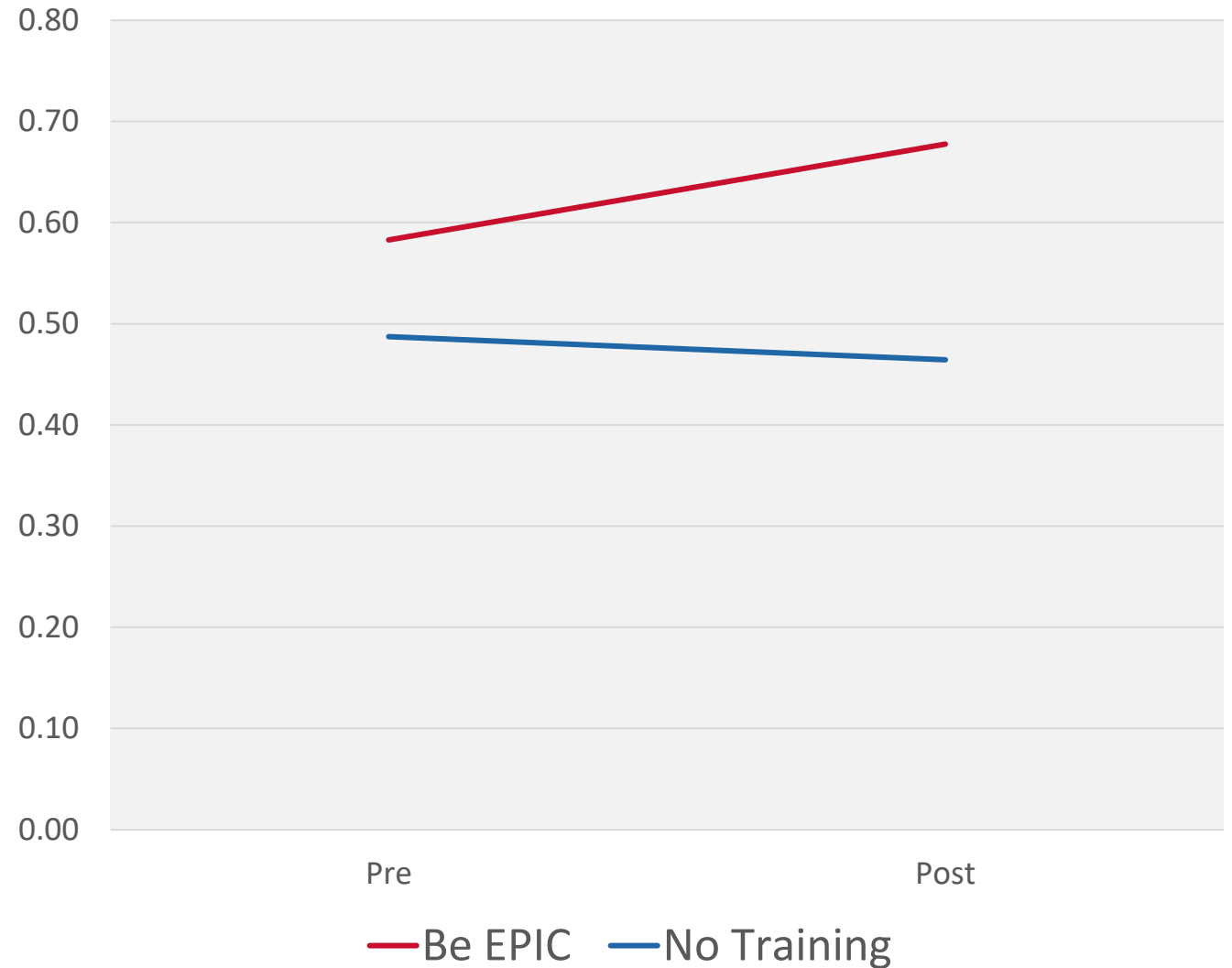
I Matter - Enhanced Relationships:

*"**I'm not as afraid of people with dementia now.** Or I don't have my wall up, to protect me. It's there, but it's not as prevalent as it was before."*



Resulted in
**more person-
centered
utterances**

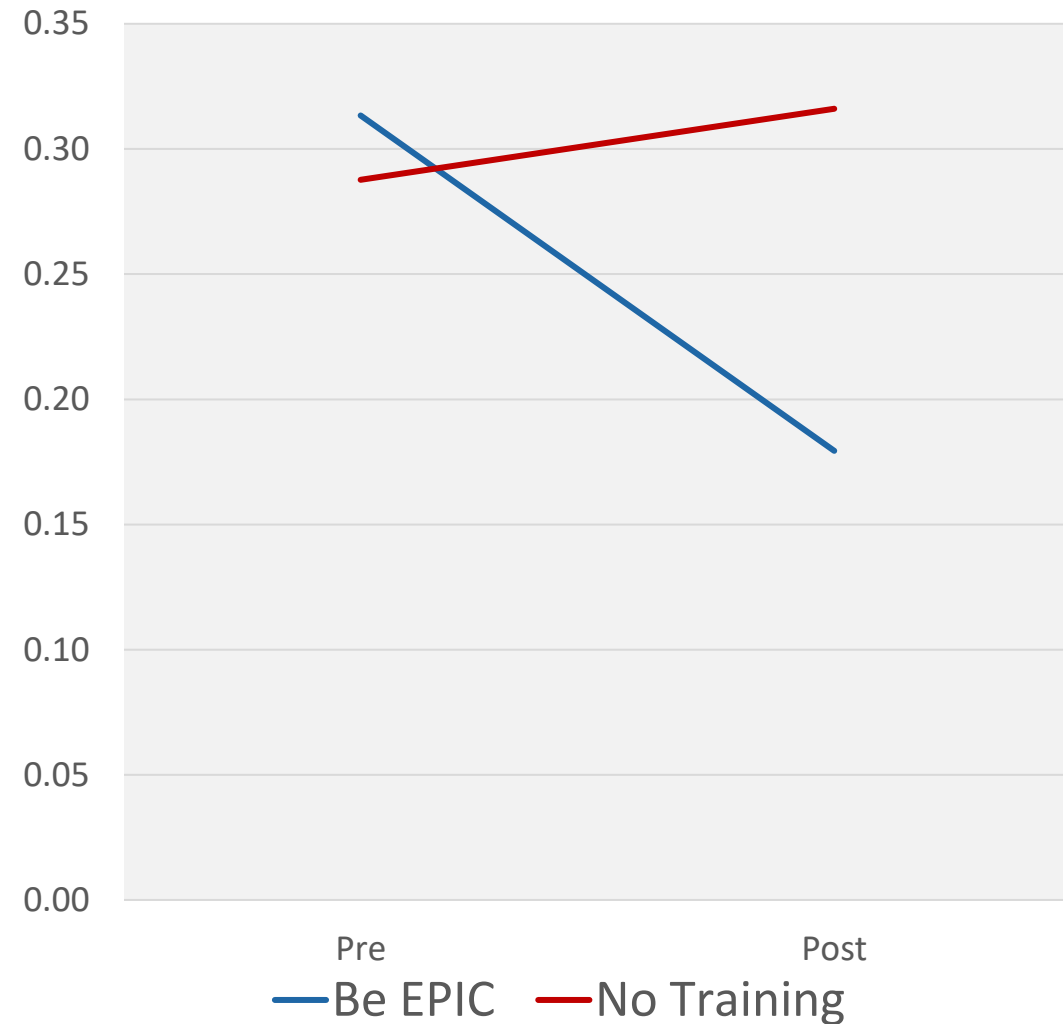
Proportions of Person-Centered Utterances





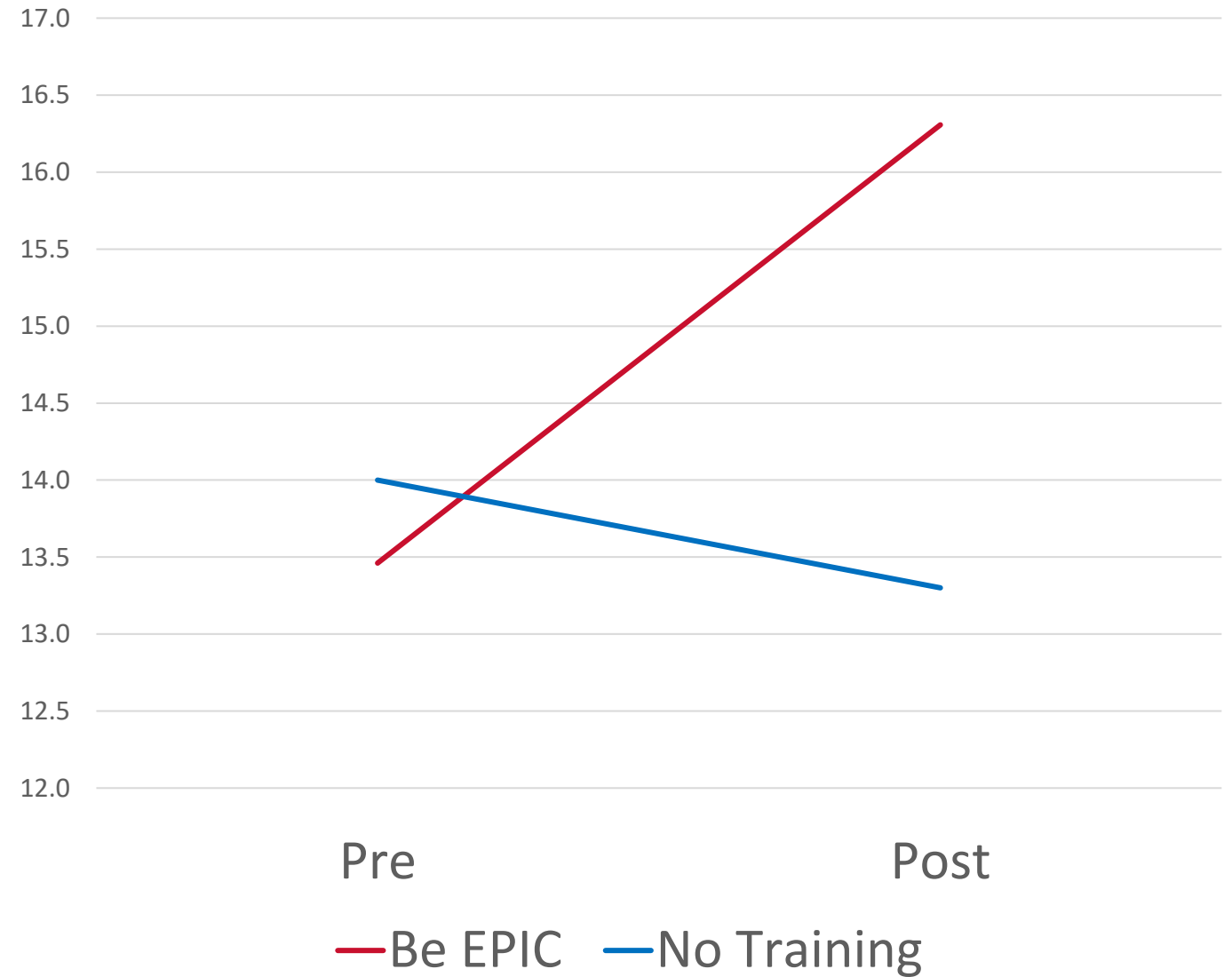
Resulted in
fewer missed opportunities for
person-centered
communication

Proportion of Utterances coded as Missed Opportunities for Person-Centered Communication





Resulted in
more confidence
about
communicating





Enhanced Person-Centered Communication



Better care relationships via person-centered communication



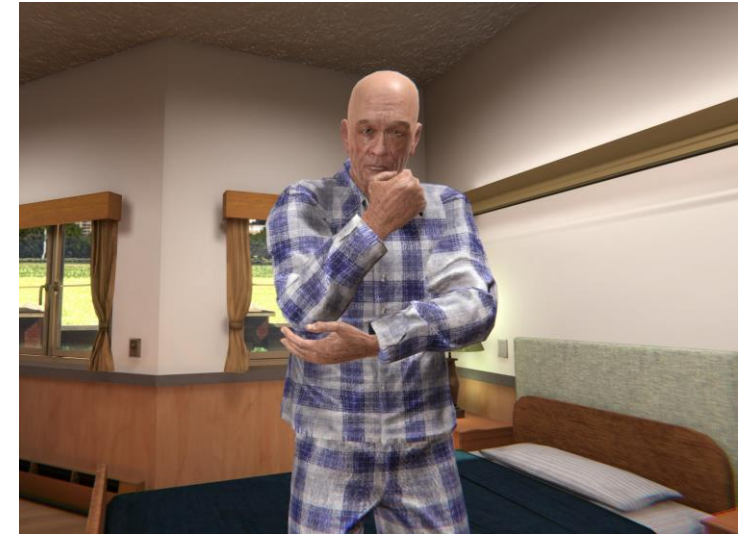
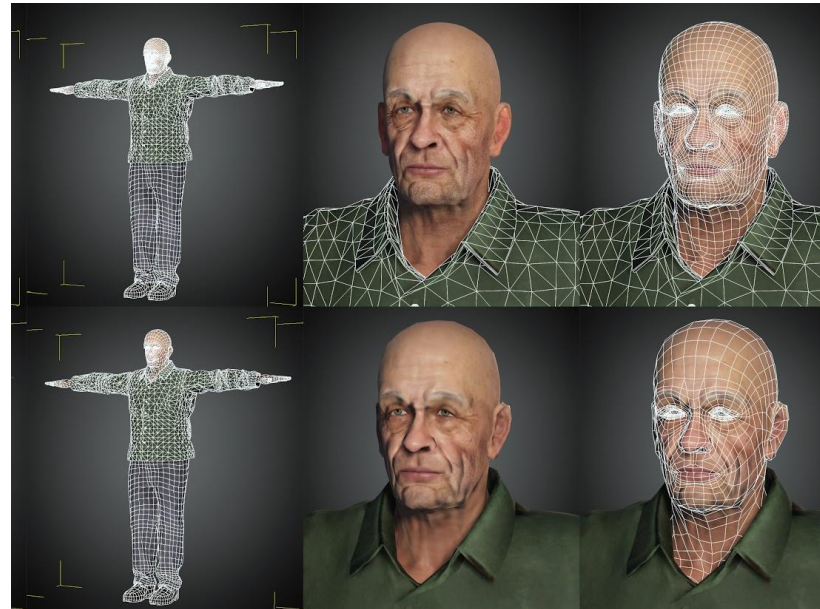
Less time addressing responsive behaviours



Less unnecessary medications



Creating Realistic Avatars Living with Dementia



Follow Us & Like Us



@SamKatzCHARU



@SamKatzCHARU



www.uwo.ca/fhs/care/

THANK YOU

Marie Savundranayagam, PhD

msavund@uwo.ca

More About [Be EPIC](#)

