

Changing the Culture of Dementia Care One Mind at a Time



**GEMS**<sup>®</sup>

- Dementia **Aware**
- Dementia **Knowledgeable**
- Dementia **Skilled**
- Dementia **Competent**

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## Why Do They Do That?

### Understanding Symptoms and Situations of Dementia Seen in Hospital and Other Care Settings

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## Normal vs. Not Normal

### Normal Aging:

Slower to think  
Slower to do  
Hesitates more  
More likely to 'look before leaping'  
Know the person but not the name  
Pause to find words  
Reminded of the past  
Harder

### Not Normal Aging:

Can't think the same  
Can't do like before  
Can't get started  
Can't seem to move on  
Doesn't think it out at all  
Can't place the person  
Words won't come – even later  
Confused about past versus now  
Very different

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## Cognitive Changes with Aging:

- Normal changes: more forgetful and slower to learn
- MCI: Mild Cognitive Impairment: Immediate recall, word finding, or complex problem-solving problems
  - Half these folks will develop dementia in 5 years
- Dementia: Chronic thinking problems in > 2 areas
- Delirium: Rapid changes in thinking and alertness, seek medical help immediately
- Depression/anxiety: Chronic unless treated, poor quality of life, "I don't know" or "I just can't" responses, no pleasure, can look like agitation and confusion

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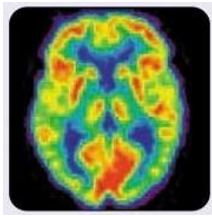
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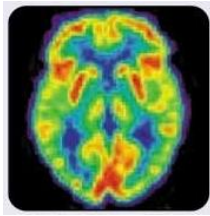
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## PET and Aging:



PET Scan of 20-Year-Old Brain



PET Scan of 80-Year-Old Brain

ADEAR, 2003

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**As we age, processing speed may slow, but we do not lose function in our brains, unless:**

**Something Goes Wrong with Our Brains**

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## So, What is Dementia?

- It is not part of normal aging! It is a disease!
- It is more than just forgetfulness, which is part of normal aging
- It makes independent life impossible, eventually
- It changes everything over time
- It is not something the person can control
- It is not always the same for every person
- It is not a mental illness
- It is real
- It is hard at times

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## Four Truths About Dementia:

1. At least 2 parts of the brain are dying:  
one related to memory and another part
2. It is chronic – can't be fixed
3. It is progressive – it gets worse
4. It is terminal – it will kill, eventually

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# Brain Failure

*The person's brain is dying*

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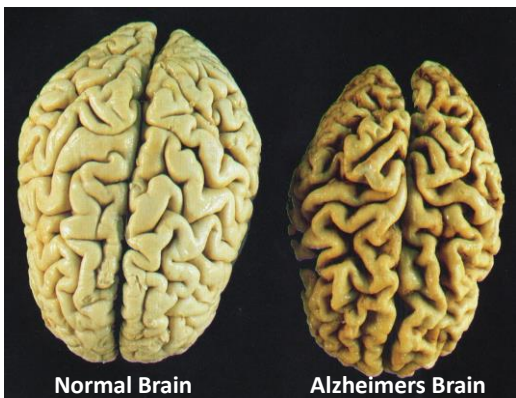
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Used with permission from *Alzheimers: The Broken Brain*, 1999 University of Alabama

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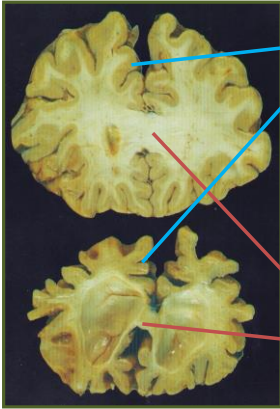
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Storage units  
- data

Executive  
Control  
Center:  
Emotions  
Behavior  
Judgment  
Reasoning

Wiring –  
connecting,  
bringing data in  
and sending  
data out

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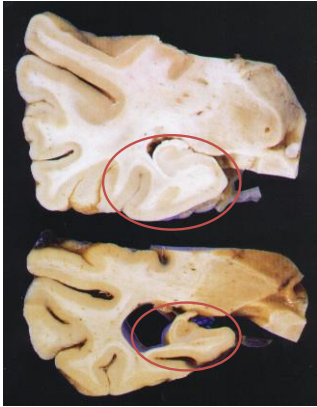
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Hippocampus  
Big Changes:

- Learn and remember
- Way-finding
- Passage of time

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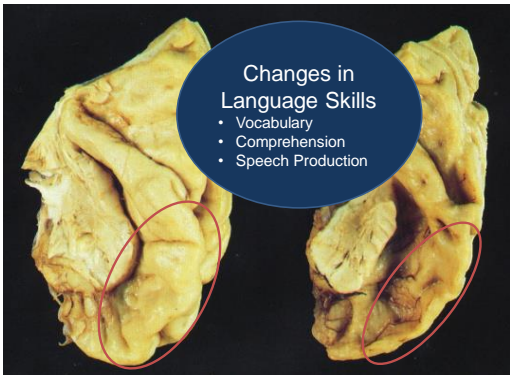
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Changes in  
Language Skills

- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Speech Production

Understanding Language – Big Change

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Hearing Sound – Not Changed

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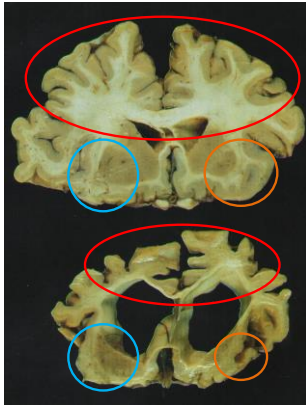
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**Sensory Strip**  
**Motor Strip**  
**White Matter**  
**Connections:**  
**Big Changes**

**Automatic**  
**Speech**  
**Rhythm – Music**  
**Expletives:**  
**Preserved**

**Formal Speech**  
**and Language**  
**Center:**  
**Huge Changes**

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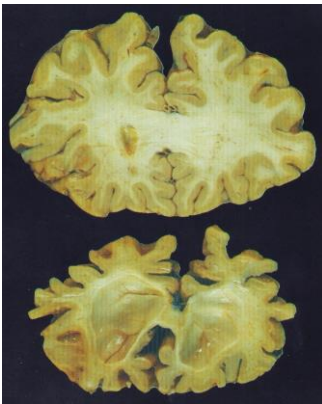
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**Executive**  
**Control**  
**Center**  
**Changes:**

- Being logical, reasonable, rational
- Controlling impulses
- Making decisions
- Initiating-sequencing-terminating-transitioning
- Being self-aware
- Seeing other perspectives

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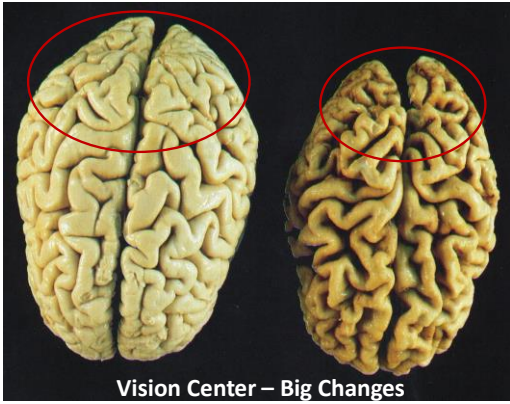
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**Dementia  
does not equal  
Alzheimer's  
does not equal  
Memory Problems**

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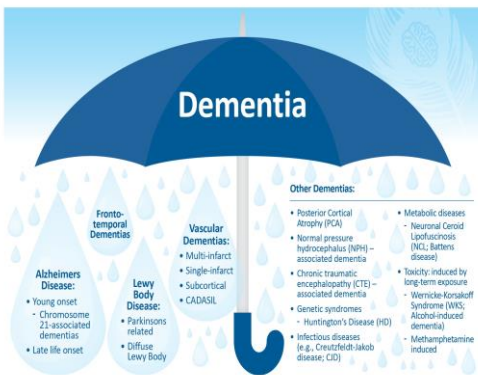
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**Believe:**

**People with dementia are doing the best they can**

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## **How You Look At Dementia Matters!**

- It is not all about loss
- It is not 'untreatable'
- It is not unpredictable
- Behaviors don't come out of nowhere
- Dementia doesn't just affect the person with the disease – it impacts all of us

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