

MEMORY, FORGETTING, & ART



PRESERVING PERSONHOOD THROUGH ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

39th Annual Alzheimer's Disease Management & Research Symposium

Alzheimer's Tennessee

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Tuscaloosa VA, The University of Alabama, Cognitive Dynamics Foundation

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DISCLOSURES



Art created in BAT

- Dr. Potts has received publishing royalties from publications relating to health care (minimal royalties for published books about dementia care giving, poetry related to care giving, etc.). The following book titles are relevant to this disclosure: A Pocket Guide for the Alzheimer's Coregiver, Finding Joy in Alzheimer's, Treasure for Alzheimer's, A Heart that Knows Your Name, and Bringing Art to Life.
- Dr. Potts has a non-compensated relationship as President with Cognitive Dynamics Foundation (non-profit) that is relevant to this presentation.

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OBJECTIVES



- Discuss the neuroscience of memory
- Describe changes in memory associated with Alzheimer's disease
- Elucidate the stigma associated with memory loss, Pillars of Personhood, and the bolstering of personhood through creativity, narrative, and supportive relationships
- Explore artistic engagement for persons living with Alzheimer's and other dementias and creativity's
 effects on memory, personhood and narrative, highlighting the role of art therapy
- Identify autobiographical memory elements present in representative dementia art
- Highlight an art therapy program developed to enhance quality of life in persons living with dementia, to illicit and preserve life stories, and to build intergenerational relationships

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MEMORY, FORGETTING, & ART



- Memory: Learning: the process of acquiring new information, the outcome of which is memory (Gazzaniga, M. S., et al, 2019)
- Forgetting: "It is through the erosion of memory that time heals all wounds."—Lisa Genova
- Art: "Art is an appeal against vanishing."—Lynn Casteel Harper



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Art by Lester E. Potts, Jr., an artist who had Alzheimer

TYPES OF MEMORY (GAZZANIGA, M. S., ET AL, 2019)



- Very brief sensory memory milliseconds seconds
- Short-term/working memory (short-term information retention and capacity for performing mental operations on the content) - seconds - minutes
- Long-term memory years decades
 - Declarative memory (explicit) conscious memory for learned facts (semantic) and experienced events (episodic); consciously accessed; verbally reported
 - Nondeclarative memory (implicit) nonconscious memory that cannot be verbally reported, often expressed through the performing of procedures (procedural)

HOW ARE MEMORIES MADE? (GENOVA, L., 2021)



- Encoding Sights, sounds, information, emotion, meaning of what has been perceived/paid attention to; translated into neural activity
- Consolidation The brain weaves unrelated collections of neural activity into a single web of connections.
- Storage Pattern of activity is maintained through persistent structural/chemical changes in neurons
- Retrieval Connections of learned/experienced information can be reactivated, recalled, & recognized.

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PRIMARY BRAIN REGIONS FOR MEMORY

(GAZZANIGA, M. S., ET AL, 2019; GENOVA, L., 2021)



- Hippocampus ("memory weaver," or "save button")
 - Weaves who/what/where/when/why into a retrievable unit of associated data (memory)
 - · Activates regions destined for long-term memory until rewiring produces a stable, connected pattern
 - · Involved in spatial navigational learning
- Pre-frontal cortex (present moment)
 - Working memory limited space for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, language, emotions
 - Holds 7 +/- 2 items for 15 to 30 seconds
- · Amygdala (emotions, especially fear)
 - Activated by emotion/surprise
 - Alerts hippocampus to consolidate important incoming data into memory

PRETRODICE

MORE ON MEMORY (GAZZANIGA, M. S., ET AL, 2019; GENOVA, L., 2021)



- Meaning matters for memory—interesting, meaningful, new, surprising, significant, emotional, consequential
- Storage occurs in the same neural pattern that was stimulated when first experienced.
- · Perception/attention are essential for the process of remembering.
- Hippocampus saves/consolidates significant items from working memory to form long-term memories.
- Autobiographical memory—life story made up of most meaningful episodic memories
- Reminiscence bump—important episodic memories from ages 15 30

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MORE ON MEMORY (GAZZANIGA, M. S., ET AL, 2019; GENOVA, L., 2021)



- · Relational memory—memory for relations among elements of an experience
- Representations of an event distributed throughout the cortex come together in the mesial temporal lobe, where the hippocampus binds them.
- Consolidation: repeated activation of memory creates connections (No longer requires the hippocampus)
- Context, external/internal, becomes part of memory; activation of any part can trigger retrieval of others
- $\bullet \ \ Remembering \ is \ reactivating, reconsolidating, rewriting, resaving \ (re-contextualizing \ the \ story)$

MORE ON MEMORY (GAZZANIGA, M. S., ET AL, 2019; GENOVA, L., 2021)



- · Rehearsal, self-testing, visuospatial imagery, mnemonics, surprise, emotion, meaning improve memory.
- · Sleep saves newly-encoded memories.
- 2 primary ways to resist effects of time: repetition/meaning
- Recalling life's most meaningful details (autobiographical memory) bolsters sense of self, narrative, growth/relationships with others.
- $\bullet \ \ \, \text{Expressive arts/creativity access and bolster autobiographical memory.}$

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ALZHEIMER'S-ASSOCIATED MEMORY CHANGES (WEINTRAUB, S., ET AL, 2012)



- Earliest episodic memory decline due to ineffective consolidation/storage (hippocampal damage)
- Next semantic memory—object naming, verbal fluency and semantic categorization decreases
- Working memory decline comes later.
- The extent of atrophy in the mesial temporal lobe correlates to deficits in episodic memory.
 Why is the loss of memory so stigmatizing? Does one's memory loss make one less of a person?





/'STIgMƏ/

The disapproval of, or discrimination against, a person based on perceivable characteristics that serve to distinguish them from other members of a society.

STIG MA

What is the root cause of the stigma associated with Alzheimer's and other dementias?

rain with A.D Normally Aged Brain

THE ROOT CAUSE OF STIGMA?

- The belief, perhaps unacknowledged, that people living with dementia somehow embody less personhood than others who don't have dementia, simply because they are losing memory and other cognitive functions.
- That the diagnosis of dementia somehow renders one less a person than before receiving the diagnosis, as if personhood could be diminished by any circumstance or condition at all.

WHAT IS PERSONHOOD AND HOW IS IT AFFECTED BY DEMENTIA?

"IT MAY NOT BE DYING WE FEAR SO MUCH, BUT THE DIMINISHED SELE"

- ANATOLE BROYARD



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DEFINITIONS OF PERSONHOOD

Legal

Philosophical

Psychological / Neurological

Ethical

Theological

Ontological

Relational

Societal

PERSONHOOD

- Is imparted
- Cannot be gained or lost
- · Is not earned
- · Is sacred and carries inherent dignity
- Is not dependent on productivity, morals, or cognitive ability

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PERSONHOOD

- This concept of personhood has profound implications for the way we, both as individuals and as a society, regard persons living with dementia.
- It should call forth our finest and most compassionate efforts as care partners.
- It means that we never give up on persons living with dementia, no matter how far the progression, severe the disease, misunderstood the behavior, etc.
- There are no human "shells."

THE MORAL IMPERATIVE OF MEMORY LOSS

Does one have to possess an intact memory to be considered a person?

"If I am forgetting you, does that make me less than me?"

What is the moral imperative of care partners, both lay and professional, in this situation?



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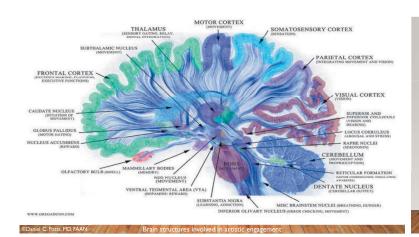
"Creativity is seen as leading to well-being by helping us articulate a story about who we are (coherence), exercise a purpose, and demonstrating the significance or value of our lives ... Creativity can also help us build a legacy, something that can live beyond us and that can reduce the stress, anxiety, or at the very least the unsettledness we can feel when we face mortality."

—ANNE BASTING

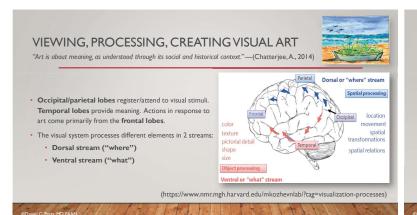
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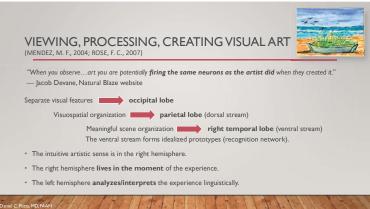


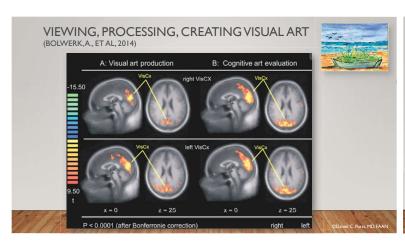
BRAIN BENEFITS OF ART (WWW.NPR.ORG/SECTIONS/HEALTH-SHOTS/2000/04/11/195010044/FEELING-ARTSY-HERES-HOW-MAKING-ART-HELPS-YOUR-BIRAIN) "Creativity is chocolate for the brain"—Gene Cohen, MD • Facilitates the development/preservation of visuospatial and fine motor skills • Increases one's ability to create abstractions and process concepts in abstract • Helps to lessen brain effects of stress • Helps to preserve patience, attention and self-regulation • Makes connections between unrelated things and fosters communication • Activates the reward (pleasure) centers of the brain • Engenders a flow state, associated with a sense of well-being











ART, MEMORY, SELFHOOD, & NARRATIVE A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH (AUMANN, A., 2019) According to philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard: • The true self is discovered by turning inward. · Humans seek coherence: alignment of past and future. to make sense of life narrative/story. Art and creativity help to provide that unity.



- The self is a work of art (a story) to be shaped; life narrative/story determines identity. Inner unity is required
- Art matters primarily because it assists with the "project of selfhood," the shaping of life narrative/story.
- · Art offers lenses through which to more clearly see selves and the world. Art is a mirror for life.

This function of art may be particularly important in persons living with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

ART, MEMORY, SELFHOOD & NARRATIVE

THE ROLE OF ART THERAPY
(ABRAHAM, R., 2005; HASS-COHEN, N., FINDLAY, J. C., 2015)

Art Therapy-integrative mental health/human services profession that enriches lives/communities through active artmaking, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship.

–(American Art Therapy Association, 2021)

- · Art therapy supports meaning and bypasses verbal aspects of brain function, aiding in communication.
- Art therapy can provide a means of expressing emotions, bolstering self-image.
- The novel, positive aspects of art can excite the formation/updating of autobiographical memory.
- $\bullet \quad \text{Art making, associated with parietal, temporal, limbic and right hemisphere functions,} \textbf{synthesizes and} \\$ integrates psychological/emotional/cognitive functions.

ART, MEMORY, SELFHOOD & NARRATIVE

THE ROLE OF ART THERAPY (ABRAHAM, R., 2005; HASS-COHEN, N., FINDLAY, J. C., 2015)



- · Art therapy likely promotes neuroplasticity in brain regions that contribute to psychological wellbeing. Brain plasticity, through learned happiness/compassion, builds resiliency.
- Art therapy, including its relational aspects, can activate and mend attachment wounds, helping to limit
 emotional reactivity, stabilize affect and update/rewrite autobiographical memory.
- · Art therapy can facilitate creation of a new meaningful narrative involving negative or traumatic memories, resulting in a transformed sense of self and renewed autobiographical memory.

ART, MEMORY, SELFHOOD & NARRATIVE

THE ROLE OF ART THERAPY
(ABRAHAM, R., 2005; HASS-COHEN, N., FINDLAY, J. C., 2015)

"The process transforms the space and canvas into symbolic self-spaces. Art reveals the interior space of the artist."

- \bullet R hemisphere holds nonverbal autobiographical memories; the L integrates them with a verbal story.
- R hemisphere holds the social-emotional self, & orbitofrontal structures integral to the interpersonal sense of self. Image-making may directly access this area of the brain. Brain regions associated with the social-emotional self are less adversely affected by Alzheimer's pathology.
- Music and color/sensory stimuli can provide a gateway to the R hemisphere. Color and movement in
 painting can inspire personal insights.
- "Adding color, associated with expression of emotion, to pencil drawings helps integrate cognitive and emotional brain centers while consolidating a more expressive understanding of the self."

ART, MEMORY, SELFHOOD & NARRATIVE

THE ROLE OF ART THERAPY
(ABRAHAM, R., 2005; HASS-COHEN, N., FINDLAY, J. C., 2015)



"You must know that there is nothing higher and stronger and more wholesome for life in the future than some good memory, especially a memory of childhood, of home."—Fyodor Dostoyevsky

- · Recollection of early memories is associated with aspects of wellbeing (self-esteem/self-control).
- Memories from childhood/adolescence may present as stand-alone visual images/stories.
- Meaning is made by linking memories to the way the self is currently understood (compassionate listener) (compassionate "container") (memory keeper).
- The **default mode network** (DMN) engenders wandering thoughts (~meditation), associated with creativity, and has been associated with psychological resiliency. Oscillation between frontal left-brain areas & DMN in the temporoparietal lobes likely forms the **foundation of creativity**.

ART, MEMORY, SELFHOOD & NARRATIVE THE ROLE OF ART THERAPY (ABRAHAM, R., 2005; HASS-COHEN, N., FINDLAY, J. C., 2015) "Persons w/dementia have an interior, subjective world. Persons w/dementia, overwhelmed by loss of verbal skills, can give voice to this inner world through art."—Ruth Abraham When disability limits language, images become significant both as a means to communicate

- L ant. temporal lobe degeneration enhances critical R hemisphere functions causing heightened activity.







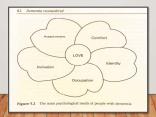
ART, MEMORY, SELFHOOD & NARRATIVE "All paths lead to the same goal: to convey to others what we are."—Pablo Neruda



STORY "Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we will ever do." -Brene 'Brown

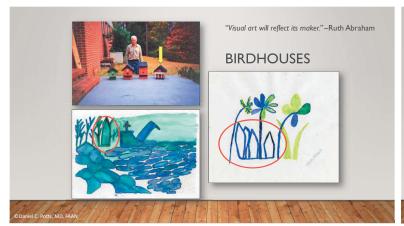
WE CAN HELP THEM OWN THEIR STORY... THOMAS KITWOOD'S PHILOSOPHY

- Dementia is best understood as an interplay between neurological impairment and psychological factors (especially the social context of the environment of care).
- Persons living with dementia exist in a state of relative well-being or ill-being, based on not only neuropathology but also the degree to which the following needs are met in an affirming social context (personhood is in part maintained through relationships):



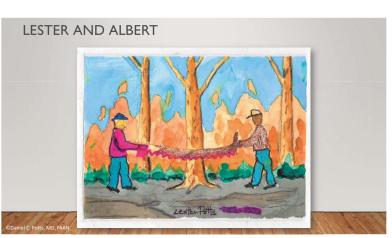
PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PERSON-CENTERED CARE FAZIO, ET AL

- Know the person living with dementia.
- · Recognize and accept the person's reality.
- · Identify and support ongoing opportunities for meaningful engagement.
- Build and nurture authentic, caring relationships.
- Create and maintain a supportive community for individuals, families and
- · Evaluate care practices regularly and make appropriate changes.

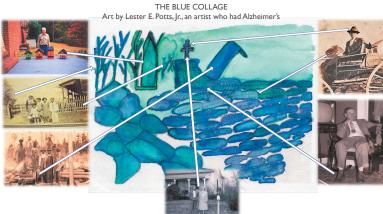




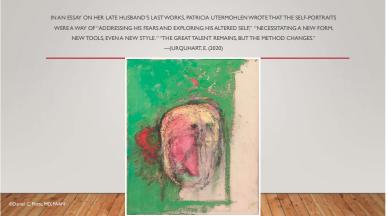
















EDUCATIONAL & TRAINING ELEMENTS OF BATL

- **Neuroscience** of memory & common types of dementia, including research updates on emerging diagnostic and treatment paradigms
- Virtual Reality training on the lived experience of dementia
- Person-centered care & communication techniques
- Care giving & impact of dementia on family systems
- Art therapy & other expressive arts therapies and their use in dementia care
- Mindfulness, present moment centeredness, self-discovery & cultivating gratitude

BRINGING ART TO LIFE RESEARCH SUMMARY KEISHA CARDEN, CANDICE REEL, DR. REBECCA ALLEN, ALABAMA RESEARCH INSTITUTE ON AGING

- Students show increased empathy and improved attitudes toward older adults and persons living with dementia
- Existential awareness fosters mindfulness and empathy that subsequently facilitates change in ageist attitudes
- Engagement with the present moment with other group members versus meaningful engagement with art was a more powerful predictor of relationship building, conversations regarding purpose-and meaning-in-life, and subsequent shifts in ageist attitudes
- Total engagements were significantly higher in morning sessions than in afternoon sessions
- Two emergent themes within the verbal engagements were identified: validation of personhood and reminiscence of family ties











"From mirror after mirror no vanity is displayed; I'm looking for the face I had "We are not before the world was made." human beings -William Butler Yeats having a spiritual experience. Dear World, If I forget, We are please show me back to me. spiritual beings having a human experience" Teilhard de Chardin

"I ask myself if memory can be contained exclusively, discretely, in the mind of one person, or if it might be a more collective experience than most of us perceive." - Eileen Delehanty Pearkes



SUMMARY



- The neuroscience of memory reveals a complex, multimodal, multipathway, neuroplastic sy which integrates diverse brain regions and promotes not only human surviving and thriving, but also the expression of selfhood and the making of meaning in personal, social and cultural contexts.
- Memory changes associated with Alzheimer's disease include progressive declines, first, in episodic, then semantic and working memory.
- For persons living with Alzheimer's and other dementias, the making of meaning, the bolstering of selfhood, the expression of emotions, the facilitation of communication, the recollection of narrative, the generation of mindfulness and flow, and the preservation of relationships are among the most important effects of engagement in art and creativity.
- · Expressive arts programs can foster creativity, tap autobiographical memory, grow empathy, bolster personhood, build relationships and increase self-awareness in other individuals and in the human community at large.

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THANKYOU!

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