Coping with Amber Distress

Appreciating Sensory Need and Sensory Intolerance
Now for the GEMS...

Sapphires
Diamonds
Emeralds
Ambers
Rubies
Pearls
Now for the GEMS…

- Sapphires – True Blue – Slower BUT Fine
- Diamonds – Repeats & Routines, Cutting
- Emeralds – Going – Time Travel – Where?
- Ambers – In the moment - Sensations
- Rubies – Stop & Go – Big Movements
- Pearls – Hidden in a Shell - Immobile

General Vision Changes

- Sapphire – lost about 45° of field
- Diamond – tunnel vision
- Emerald – binocular vision
- Amber – sees parts not whole, changes in object recognition
- Ruby – monocular
- Pearl – movement, familiar/unfamiliar
Receptive Language Changes
- Sapphires – high pitched harder, crowded & loud spaces more challenging
- Diamonds – Slower, missing consonants
- Emeralds – missing about 1/4 words, needs pauses – better with rhythm
- Ambers – 2/4 words – misses much, catches some key words out of context
- Rubies – social chit-chat, music, rhythm, tone of voice
- Pearls – familiar and friendly, calm or excite

Expressive Language Changes
- Sapphires – word finding a little slower, pauses
- Diamonds – varies with affect, word finding problems, mis-speaking at times of stress
- Emeralds – gets stuck in social, repeats phrases or words, intonation matters
- Ambers – repetitive, variable volume, echo
- Rubies – less articulated speech, babble, hum or sing, rhythmic vocalizations
- Pearls – sounds to single words, responsive
**Dexterity – Hand Skills**
- Sapphires – still intact slightly slower
- Diamonds – Slower, limited with bilateral skilled integration
- Emeralds – individual actions are there, sequencing is challenging, more forceful
- Ambers – heightened use of hands, skilled tool use decreased, strong
- Rubies – whole hand with limited finger use – hold and carry, difficulty with release
- Pearls – grasp strong, limited opening

**Body Skills**
- Sapphires – sustained - slower
- Diamonds – details not as good, globally Ok
- Emeralds – better with dominant side, errors
- Ambers – strong more than skilled, limited safety awareness
- Rubies – whole body not segmented, front ok back not
- Pearls – reflexive, great trouble with gravity or speed or movement
People Awareness Skills
- Sapphires – sustained – slower to ID
- Diamonds – recent ?, older/deeper better
- Emeralds – recognize like/not like,
- Ambers – can get lost in old-new relationships, will like or not like in the moment
- Rubies – like or not like, familiar versus not
- Pearls – voices, faces, touches, smells familiar or not

Place Awareness Skills
- Sapphires – sustained → turned around
- Diamonds – familiar feels best → gets lost in community & in unfamiliar places
- Emeralds – if OK with what is seen is OK, if not OK seeks the old familiar – task or social
- Ambers – OK if “here” feels OK, otherwise will seek “there”
- Rubies – may or may not have a destination more a movement or stillness pattern
- Pearls – is what is experienced comforting
Time Awareness Skills
- Sapphires – lifelong – crunched or expanded
- Diamonds – more the past than now
- Emerals – lost in episodes or caught in loops
- Ambers – in the moment not the task or sequence
  - Rubies – in the experience, not the time
  - Pearls – time has much less meaning

Situation Awareness Skills
- Sapphires – sustained → tough to think
- Diamonds – old emotions drive new interactions
- Emeralds – has moments of time travel
- Ambers – more sensory awareness than intellectual awareness, immediate not big picture
  - Rubies – only in moments, less body aware
  - Pearls – more inside than externally aware
Ambers
- Amber Alert
- Caution!
- Caught in a moment
- All about Sensation
- Explorers

Ambers
- Private & Quiet OR Public & Noisy
- All About Sensory Tolerance & Needs
- Touching - Tasting – Handling – Exploring
- Attraction – Avoidance
- Over-stimulated – Under-stimulated
- No safety awareness
- Ego-centric
Amber

- LOTS of touching, handling, mouthing, manipulating
- Focus on fingers and mouth
- Get into things
- All about sensation....
- Invade space of others
- Do what they like
- AVOID what they do NOT

Amber Interests

- Things to mess with (may be people)
- Places to explore
- Stuff to take, eat, handle, move...
- Visually interesting things
- People who look or sound interesting OR places that are quiet and private
- Textures, shapes, movement, colors, numbers, stacking, folding, sorting...
Amber Issues

- Getting into stuff – taking stuff
- Bothering others
- Not able make needs known
- Not understanding what caregivers are doing
- Not liking being helped/touched/handled
- Not like showers or baths
- Repetition of sounds/words/actions

Visual Cues that Help

- Automatic social greeting signals
- Lighted work surfaces with strong props
- Demonstrations – work along side
- Model the actions
- Do the action one time, then offer the prop
- Show one step at a time
- Show a NEW item, then cover the old
Verbal Cues that Help

- Call name
- Use simple noun, verb, or noun + verb
  - “Cookie?”
  - “Sit down”
  - “Let’s go” (with gesture)
- Give simple positive feedback
- Listen for their words, then
  - use a few and leave a blank at the end of the sentence

Physical Cues that Help

- Show the motion or action wanted
- Touch the body part of interest
- Position the prop for use – light touch
- Show the motion on yourself
- Use hand under hand guidance
- Offer the prop once started – encourage their use of the item
Hand-Under-Hand Assistance

How to Help

- Provide step-by-step guidance & help
- Give demonstration – show
- Hand-under-hand guidance after a few repetitions, uses utensils (not always well)
- Offer something to handle, manipulate, touch, gather
- Limit talking, noise, touch, other activities
- SUBSTITUTE don’t SUBTRACT
To Connect with Ambers

- Make an Emotional Connection
- Use props or objects
- Consider PARALLEL engagement at first
  - Look at the ‘thing’, be interested, share it over….
- Talk less, wait longer, take turns, COVER don't confront when you aren't getting the words, enjoy the exchange
- Use automatic speech and social patterns to start interactions
- Keep it short – Emphasize the VISUAL

BAD Helper Habits to Break!

- Talking too much, showing too little
- Keep on pushing
- Doing for NOT with
- Stripping the environment
- Leaving too much in the environment
- Getting in intimate space
- Over or under stimulating
- Getting loud and forceful
Humans have FIVE ways of getting information from the world around them

What we:
See
Hear
Feel
Smell
Taste
Two Major Categories

Protective
Discriminatory

Two Categories

Protective
• FAST
• Reflexive
• Try to keep you safe
• Autonomic – reflexive
• BIG!
• Strong Emotions!!!
• Spinal & Primitive
• Flight-Fight-Flight

Discriminatory
• Slower
• Brain driven
• Exploring and figuring out
• Details & differences
• Focused
• Ignore big world to experience immediate
• Want more or want less
With Dementia

**Protective**
- Less able to pick up on ‘danger’ signals/cues
- More likely to over-react to ‘normal’ range
- To non-demented seems ‘unpredictable’
- BUT – it’s the new predictable – set point
- May move toward ‘dangerous’ versus away from it

**Discriminatory**
- Either hyper-focused OR un-observant
- From multi-modal awareness to single characteristic attention
- Shortened task attention span
- Variable sensory attention
- Atypical focus on a characteristic – edges of the frame versus the picture

With Dementia All Senses are Affected:
- Miss information
- Mis-understand information
- Over-react to information
- Under-react to information
- Get stuck on a sensation
- Can’t stand a sensation
- Variable abilities
- Can’t adjust or adapt to sensation
With Dementia
It’s All About Finding the BALANCE!!!!

Balance…

Like – Good for you
Want – Tolerate
Pleasant – Unpleasant
Comforting – Annoying
Stimulating – Frightening
Calming – Boring
Nothing – Too much
Familiar – Novel – New
Sensation

A common stimulus
That causes an Individual experience

The Stimulus

- Single mode versus multi-modal
- Constant versus intermittent
- Subtle versus EXTREME
- Still versus moving
- Gradual versus sudden
- Sought out versus given
- Controlled by me versus by you
- Expected versus unexpected
Vision Changes

**Protective**
- Peripheral awareness
- Visual field
- Depth perception
- Light-dark accommodation
- Tracking
- Blink

**Discriminatory**
- Organized scanning
- Saccadic eye movements
- Color discrimination
- Figure ground perception
- Near-far accommodation
- Near acuity
- Night vision
- Object recognition
- Facial recognition

Hearing-Comprehension Changes

**Protective**
- Direction
- Emergency signals
- Alerting communication

**Discriminatory**
- Localization
- Comprehension
- Sound recognition
- Voice recognition
- Foreground-background
- Tracking
- Following a conversation
- Interpreting meaning
- Multi-step information
Touch & Movement Changes

- This one is both complicated and IMPORTANT!!!!
- Sensation, Processing, Reactions OR Responses Happen FAST!!! Almost automatic – due to habits and procedural memories – looping once started
- Active versus passive - different

Touch ...

Movement
- Balance
- Coordination
- Speed
- Accuracy
- Strength
- Bi-lateral & uni-lateral
- Gross motor
- Fine motor
- Reflexes

Sensations
- Pressure
- Temperature
- Moving touch
- Texture
- Shapes
Touch

Protective
- Extreme Temperature
- Sharp – Cutting
- High velocity impact
- Sustained pressure
- Friction

Discriminatory
- Variation in temperature
- Variable textures
- Massage
- Wet/dry
- Manipulation
- Grasp

Movement

Protective
- Balance against gravity
- Block incoming
- Avoid contact
- Catch balance
- Maintain upright

Discriminatory
- Voluntary movements to meet goals
- Tool use
- Object manipulation
- Construction
Olfactory – Smell Changes

**Protective**
- Limited
- Smoke
- Chemicals or gas
- Spoiled food
- Body odor
- Urine or feces

**Discriminatory**
- Emotional memories
- Emotional reaction
- Pleasant-unpleasant
- Smell identification
- Stimulate hunger or thirst
- Stimulate nausea
- Localization & tracking

Gustatory – Taste Changes

- Less able to pick up on sweet and salty
  SO – they want MORE
- Still keep bitter and sour
  SO – they may not like things they used to

SPECIAL EVENTS
Things may ‘taste’ wrong
May order something then refuse to eat
Create a Sensory Preference List for YOU… for the Person

- Visual likes – stimulating & calming
- Auditory likes – stimulating & calming
- Touch likes – stimulating & calming
- Movement likes – stimulating & calming
- Smell likes – stimulating & calming
- Taste likes – stimulating & calming

Create a Sensory INTOLERANCE List FOR YOU… for the Person

- Visual Irritants
- Auditory Irritants
- Touch Irritants
- Movement Irritants
- Smell Irritants
- Taste Irritants
Gem Changes

- Sapphires – you and me as is
- Diamonds – more vocal and rigid
- Emerald - visual and auditory MOST
- Amber – ALL SENSES critical
- Ruby – Touch, movement, personal & intimate space awareness
- Pearl – Touch, Movement – intimate space KEY!

Supportive Environments

- Include 2 Factors
  - What you LIKE...
  - What’s GOOD for you!
Supportive Environments
The 3 Positive P’s

- **P**hysical Environment

- **P**eople—the ways they act and respond

- **P**rogramming

Finding Balance

Support or impair

Too much or too little
The Supportive Sensory Environment

- What you Hear
- What you See
- What you Smell/Taste
- What you Feel

What you Hear
Supports

- Quiet
- Purposeful music
- Familiar cues
- Positive human sounds

Impairs

- Constant background noise
- Intrusive sounds
- Care noise
- Negative human noise

What we See
Can you See?

Supports
- Bright light
- Non-Glare light
- Directed at work area
- Directed up-diffused

Impairs
- Dim light
- Inconsistent light
- Glaring light
- Light in eyes
What can you SEE?

- Visual Cues
  - Too much
  - Too little

Visual Cues

- Where to be
- What to do
- Orienting to place
- Orienting to task
Too Much

- Dangerous items
- Clutter
- Too Busy
- Where’s the focus

Too Little

- Sterile or Cold
- Hidden cues
- Lack of contrast
What we Smell/Taste

Affects…

• Appetite

• Social interactions

• Quality of life

Support

• Food

• Calming scents

• Stimulating scents

Impair

• Waste odors

• Medicinal odors

• Cleaning odors

• Perfumes
What you FEEL

- Temperature
- Surfaces
- Spaces

Temperature

- Very individual
- Older/colder?
- Disease states
- Type of activity
**Surfaces Support**
- Safe and stable
- Right height
- Flexible
- Activity based

**Impair**
- Very mobile
- Dangerous to touch
- “Functional”

**Spaces**
- Familiar
- Friendly
- Functional
- Forgiving
Supportive Environment

- What you LIKE

- What you NEED

- What are yours?

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