



Circle of Life

**SENIOR RESOURCE
CENTER**

Presented By:
Susan Wielechowski, CDP, PAC



Teepa Snow: Dementia Advocate and Creator of GEMS.

Positive Approach to Care

The Positive Approach to Care emphasizes practical strategies and empathy to support individuals living with dementia.

Understanding Brain Changes

Her teachings help caregivers recognize and understand the brain changes caused by dementia for better support.

Improving Communication and Compassion

Her methods foster improved communication and compassionate, person-centered care for dementia patients.



GEMS Model of Dementia



Gemstones Represent Dementia Stages

The GEMS model uses gemstones as metaphors for each stage of dementia, making the progression easier to understand.



Changing Abilities and Needs

Each gem in the model highlights distinct abilities and care requirements as dementia progresses.



Caregiver Adaptation

The GEMS model guides caregivers to adapt their strategies, improving support and communication for those with dementia.

Sapphire (GEM 1):

The Sapphire stage represents individuals who are in the earliest stages of dementia or have minimal cognitive impairment. At this stage, cognitive abilities are relatively preserved, and individuals may still be able to perform activities of daily living independently. Memory loss and cognitive decline are subtle, and individuals may exhibit occasional forgetfulness or difficulty with complex tasks.



DIAMOND

(GEM 2): The Diamond stage represents individuals with mild cognitive impairment or early-stage dementia.

Cognitive changes become more noticeable, with difficulties in memory, attention, and problem-solving.

However, individuals in this stage often retain significant functional abilities and may still engage in meaningful activities and social interactions with support.

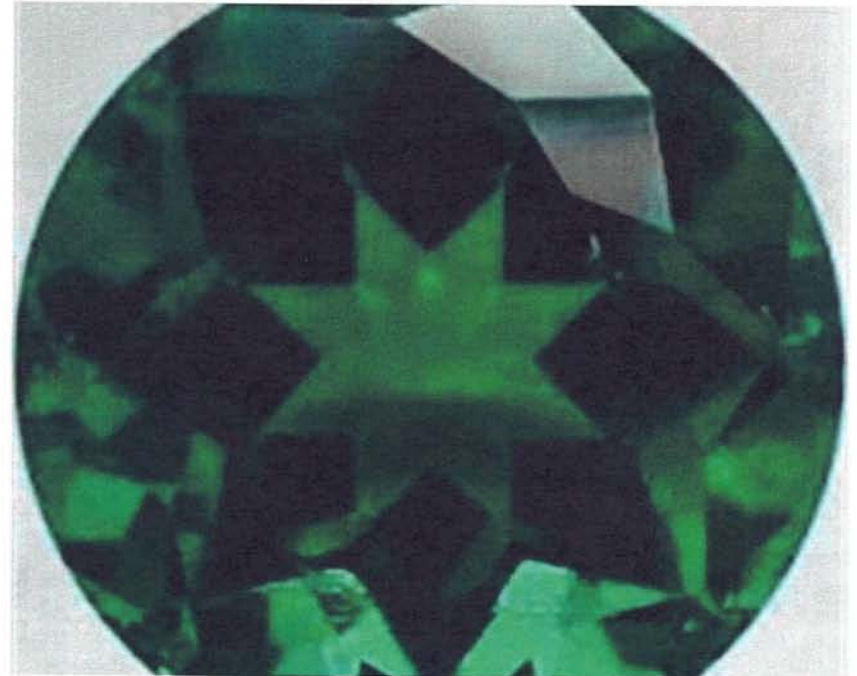
Scuba Vision



Emerald (GEM 3): The Emerald stage represents individuals with moderate dementia. At this stage, cognitive impairment becomes more pronounced, and individuals may struggle with tasks such as remembering recent events, following conversations, and managing finances. Functional abilities may decline, requiring assistance with instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) such as cooking, cleaning, and transportation.

BINOCULAR VISION

3/25/2026



SAMPLE FOOTER TEXT

Amber (GEM 4): The Amber stage represents individuals with moderately severe dementia.

Cognitive deficits are more severe, with significant memory loss, language difficulties, and impaired judgment. Individuals may

experience confusion, disorientation, and agitation, requiring increasing levels of supervision and support with activities of daily living (ADLs).

CAN CONFUSE OBJECTS



RUBY

(GEM 5): The Ruby stage represents individuals with severe dementia. At this stage, cognitive impairment is profound, and individuals may have limited verbal communication and require assistance with all aspects of daily care. Behavioral symptoms such as agitation, aggression, and wandering may be more prevalent, necessitating specialized care and support.

Monocular Vision – “One Eye Vision”

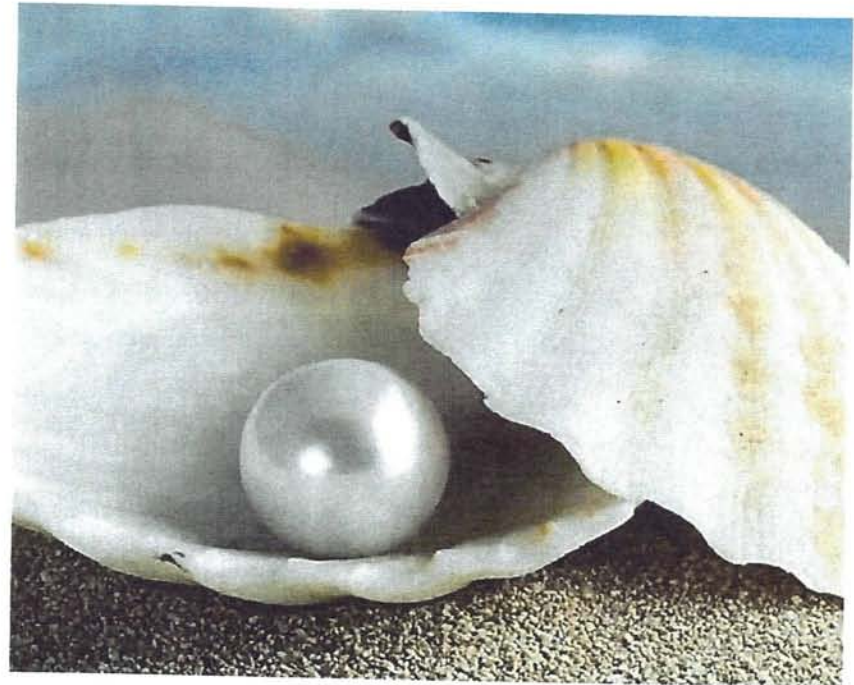


PEARL

(GEM 6): The Pearl stage represents individuals with very **severe dementia**. In this stage, cognitive function is severely impaired, and individuals may have minimal awareness of their surroundings or ability to communicate verbally. Physical care needs are extensive, and **individuals require round-the-clock supervision and assistance with all activities of daily living.**

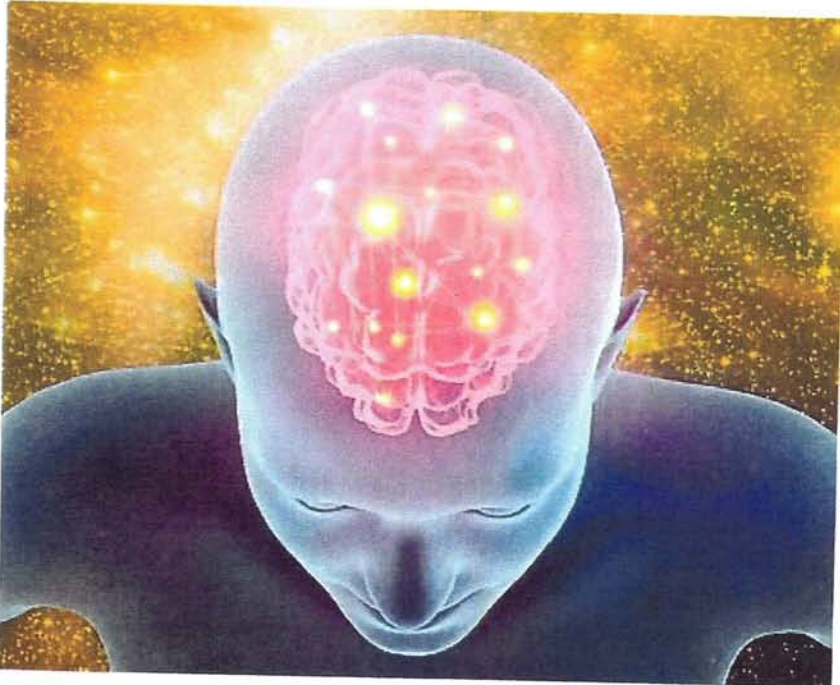
A Precious Stone hidden in a shell –

Limited Vision



By using gemstones as metaphors, the model emphasizes the value and dignity of individuals with dementia, highlighting the precious qualities that remain intact throughout the progression of the disease.

Behavioral and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia



- WHAT IS BPSD?
- Behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of non-cognitive symptoms that can cause significant distress and disability if untreated.
- **80% of PWD experience at least one symptom of BPSD** from the time of onset of their cognitive symptoms.
- In addition to the emotional distress and disability patients experience due to BPSD, it is also associated with increased caregiver stress, increased hospitalizations, and substantial increases in financial costs and premature institutionalization



3 / 25 / 2026

BEHAVIOURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS OF DEMENTIA		
Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeatedly asking questions about an upcoming event Fear of being left alone Worries about their finances, health, future 	
Depressive mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pervasive depressed mood or loss of pleasure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-deprecatory statements Expressing wish to die
Hallucinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeing people in the home who are not really there Hearing deceased people call their names 	
Misidentification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misidentification of themselves (e.g., their own reflection in the mirror) Misidentification of other persons such as carers Misidentification of events on the TV or radio as if they were real 	
Delusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People are stealing things House is not one's home Spouse or caregiver is an impostor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandonment Spouse is unfaithful
Apathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of interest in daily activities Decrease in social interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in emotional responsiveness Decrease in initiative
Negativism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refusal to cooperate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resistance to care, medication, eating
Disinhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impulsiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual disinhibition
Sleeplessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sleep-wake reversal: sleeping in the day, being awake at night Night-time wandering 	
Wandering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aimless walking Exit seeking / repeatedly trying to leave the house 	
Agitation	Complex phenomenon defined as socially inappropriate verbal, vocal or motor activity. It may include the following:	
	Physically aggressive behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grabbing Hitting Pinching Kicking Biting Slapping
	Verbally aggressive behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screaming Cursing Temper outbursts
	Non-aggressive behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Physical:</i> Restlessness, pacing, rummaging, repetitive behaviours <i>Verbal:</i> Bossiness, complaining/whining, constant requests for attention

Table 1

What Can YOU Control? OR NOT!

CONTROL...

- The environment – setting, sound, sights
- The whole day... how things fit together
- How the helper helps -
 - Approach, behaviors, words, actions, & reactions

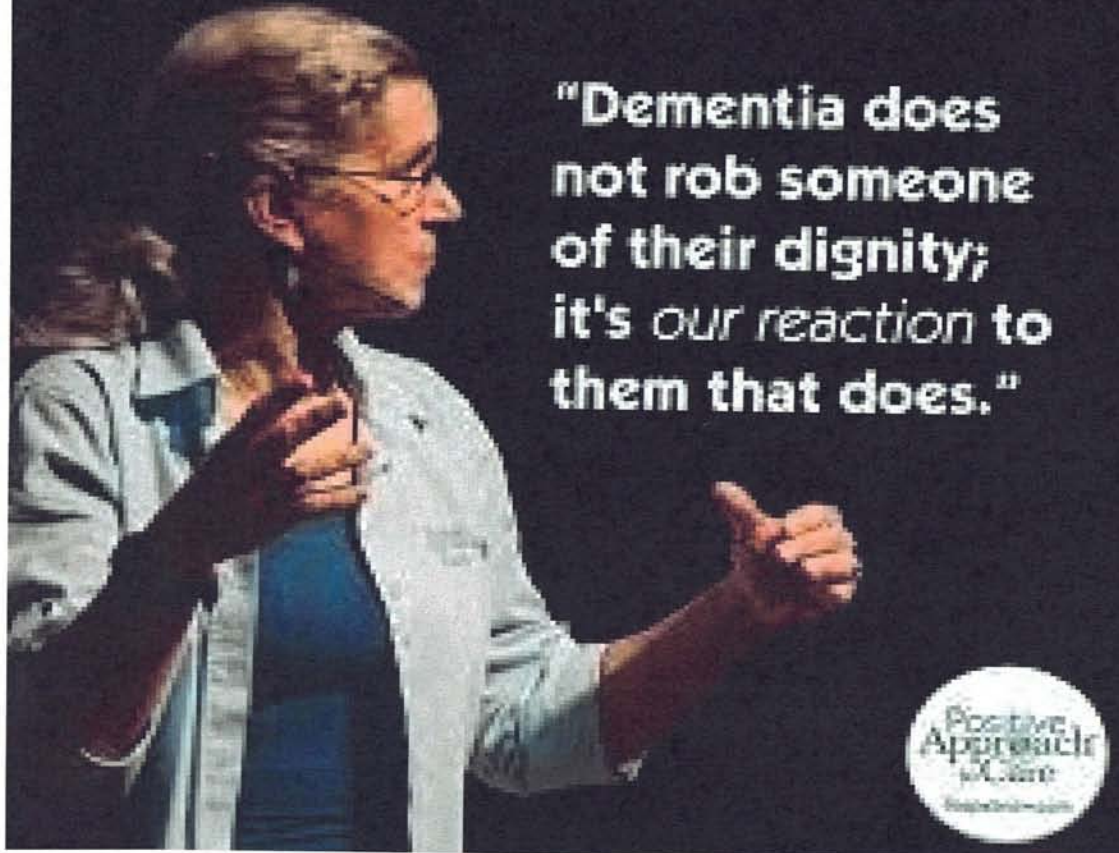


NOT CONTROL

- The person & who they have been
 - Personality, preferences & history
- The level of dementia ... NOW
- Other medical conditions & sensory status

7

A TIP FROM TEEPA



"Dementia does not rob someone of their dignity; it's *our* reaction to them that does."





LEARN THE ART OF LETTING IT GO