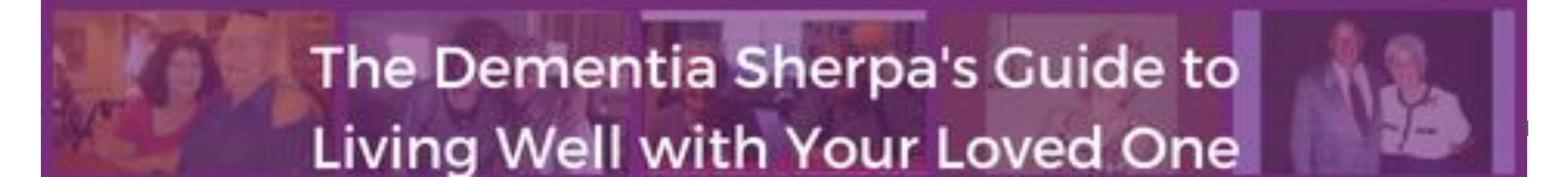




Memory Care at Home



The Dementia Sherpa's Guide to
Living Well with Your Loved One

MODULE 3 BONUS

The Language of Behaviors

“Behavior” is another word for communication. And every “behavior” is telling us something....

Here’s a look at the possible meanings behind 36 common “behaviors.”

Remember, it’s always important to use your expert knowledge of your loved one to figure out the exact meaning to your person...and know that it can change from one interaction to the next.

But you will get the hang of it if you keep at it!

THE LANGUAGE OF "BEHAVIORS"

YOU control your mindset.

Think of "behaviors" as

- "Communication I don't enjoy."
- Nonverbal communication (charades/pictionary)
- Unmet needs

THE LANGUAGE OF "BEHAVIORS"

Remember:

- “Behaviors” send a message we need to interpret
- Multiple “behaviors” can be sending the same message, and
- One “behavior” can be sending multiple messages (see next two pages for example)
- Practice will make you better!

Memory
Care 
at Home

- ♥ Peace
- ♥ Harmony
- ♥ Ease
- ♥ Connection
- ♥ JOY

MESSAGE SENT VIA...

- Name calling
- Repetitive questions
- Sub-vocalizations
- Kicking
- Biting
- Refusing care
- Repetitive calling out
- Pacing
- Hitting
- Scratching
- Spitting
- Refusing meds
- Repetitive calling out

INTERPRETED MESSAGE

- “You’re hurting me!”
- “I don’t understand what you’re trying to do!”

36 COMMON "BEHAVIORS"

- Arguing
- Biting
- Cursing
- Delusions
- Denial
- Exit-seeking
- Exposing self
- Finger painting
- Hallucinations

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **arguing**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- Anosognosia
- “I don’t believe you.”
- “I don’t want to do what you want me to do.”
- “I don’t feel like you’re listening to me.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **biting**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “You’re hurting me.”
- “You’re scaring me.”
- “I feel threatened and I’m trying to defend myself.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **cursing**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- Frontal lobe damage causing disinhibition (loss of “self-editing feature”)
- “You need to listen to me/take me seriously.”
- “I’m really angry.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **delusions**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- Delirium
- Infection
- Psychosis
- Dream/Nightmare
- Conflation of something seen on the news and other thought or belief or fear

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **denial**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- Anosognosia (“My brain is telling me something different.”)
- “I don’t believe you.”
- “I don’t trust you.”
- “You don’t have any credibility with me.”
- “This sounds too fantastical to be true.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **exit-seeking**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- “I need to get somewhere [pick up kids/get to work].”
- Increased confusion/disorientation in that moment, or due to delirium/infection
- “I’m bored.”
- “I need a change of scenery.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **exposing self**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- "I'm hot."
- "I need to use the toilet."
- "I'm craving intimacy."

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **finger painting**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- “I’m constipated.”
- “I need assistance with cleaning up.”
- “I’m bored.”
- Delirium/Infection/Psychosis

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **hallucinations**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- Visual or auditory information is being misinterpreted by the brain due to poor lighting, impaired hearing, infection, delirium, psychosis, underlying untreated primary diagnosis such as schizoaffective disorder or bipolar affective disorder.

36 COMMON "BEHAVIORS"

- Hitting
- Hoarding
- Kicking
- Lying
- Manipulation
- Name calling
- Pacing
- Picking at the air
- Picking at the carpet

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **hitting**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “You’re hurting me.”
- “You’re scaring me.”
- “I feel threatened and I’m trying to defend myself.”
- “You need to stop touching me.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **hoarding**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- “If I can’t see it, it doesn’t exist.”
- “I forgot I already have several of these items.”
- Grew up during the Great Depression or was raised by people who did.

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **kicking**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “You’re hurting me.”
- “You’re scaring me.”
- “I feel threatened and I’m trying to defend myself.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **lying**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- Conflation (marrying two or more unrelated facts and creating a new “fact”; no conscious intent to deceive)
- Confabulation (confused about facts/misinterpreted memories; no conscious intent to deceive)
- Doesn't remember

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **manipulation**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I’m struggling and trying to get what I need the only way I know how.”
- “I can’t recall information you’re referring to.”
- “I’m really anxious about this topic.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **name-calling**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- Those words were part of acceptable language usage where the person grew up; dementia has caused backward progression through time
- “I don’t like you.”
- Disinhibition

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **pacing**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I’m burning off excess energy.”
- “I’m really upset right now.”
- “I’m really anxious right now.”
- “I’m confused about where I should go/what I should do.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **picking at the air**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- Most often seen at end of life; can be caused by hallucinations, reaching for a loved one who's already passed, or back up of toxins in those with ESLD.

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **picking at the carpet**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- “I’m being helpful.”
- “I need something to do.”
- Sees something on carpet that needs picked up

36 COMMON "BEHAVIORS"

- Public disrobing
- Public masturbation
- Refusing care
- Refusing meds
- Repetitive actions
- Repetitive calling out
- Repetitive questions
- Rummaging
- Scratching

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **public disrobing**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I’m too hot.”
- “A tag is rubbing against my skin.”
- “I have to go to the bathroom.”
- “I’m ready for a shower.”
- “I want to change my clothes.”
- “I’m ready for bed.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **public masturbation**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I’m unaware of my surroundings.”
- “I’m bored.”
- “I need something to do with my hands.”
- “This feels really, really good!”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **refusing care**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I don’t want to do what you want me to do [right now/ever].”
- “I already did what you want me to do.”
- “I don’t want to do [x] with YOU.”
- “I’m busy.”
- “I don’t understand what you want me to/how to do [x].”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **refusing meds**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I don’t need this pill because I don’t have this condition.”
- “I already took my meds.”
- “I don’t trust you.”
- “I’m forgetting how to swallow.”
- “That pill tastes really bad.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **repetitive actions**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “This is soothing to me.”
- “I can do this by myself and that makes me feel good about myself.”
- “I’m not sure how to get out of this loop without your help.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **repetitive calling out**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I’m in pain!”
- “I need your help!”
- “I need some human interaction.”
- “I’m stuck.”
- “I’m hungry.”
- “I need you to help me get a break from this by giving me something else my brain can concentrate on.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **repetitive questions**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I don’t know the answer to the question I’m asking.”
- “I can’t remember the answer.”
- “I’m really anxious about this topic.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **rummaging**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I’m looking for something and I’m on a mission!”
- “I’m looking for something but can’t remember what.”
- “I’m curious.”
- “I’m bored.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **scratching**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- Others: “Get away from me”; “You’re hurting me” ; “I feel threatened and am trying to defend myself.”
- Self: “I have an itch” ; “My skin is dry.”

36 COMMON "BEHAVIORS"

- Screaming
- Sexual activity with others
- Spitting
- Sub-vocalizations
- Sundowning
- Toileting outside the bathroom
- Unauthorized shopping
- Wandering
- Yelling

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **screaming**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I’m in pain!”
- “I need your help!”
- “I’m in danger!”
- “I’m terrified!”
- “I need some human interaction.”
- “I need you to help me get a break from this by giving me something else my brain can concentrate on.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **sexual activity with others**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- “This feels really, really good.”
- Need for intimacy/human touch

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **spitting**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE/CAUSE:

- “Get away from me.”
- Oral or sinus problem
- Trying to get something out of mouth

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **sub-vocalizations**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I’m moments away from blowing my stack.”
- “I’m trying to figure something out.”
- “I’m really anxious.”
- “I’m in pain.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **sundowning**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I’m confused about the time of day.”
- “I’m over tired but not sleepy.”
- “I’m so bored and have so much energy and that makes me really frustrated.”
- “I’m hungry, confused, bored, tired, frustrated, and don’t know where to go or what to do to fix any of this.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **toileting outside the bathroom**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I don’t know where the bathroom is.”
- “I thought I was in the bathroom.”
- “I couldn’t make it to the bathroom.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **unauthorized shopping**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “That object is mine.”
- “I like it and I want it and I think I should have it.”
- “I like how this looks/feels in my hand.”
- “I might need this object later.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **wandering**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I’m lost.”
- “I don’t know where to go.”
- “I’m not sure where I’m supposed to be.”
- “I’m looking for someone/something.”

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

Message sent via **yelling**

INTERPRETED MESSAGE:

- “I’ve absolutely had it!”
- “I need help!”
- “I mean it!”