



## Town Hall Webinar Series

### Stages of Dementia and Teepa Snow's Gems™ Levels

October 21, 2020

Gia Barsell, Manager of Dementia Services and Community Education  
PAC Independent Trainer and Consultant

1

## Stages of Dementia

- Standard dementia scales focus on abilities lost.
- Alzheimer's Association Stages
  - Three-stage functional model.
  - Early, middle, late.
- Global Deterioration Scale (GDS)
  - Seven-stage medical model (1-7).
  - Hospice is stage 7.
- Allen Cognitive Levels
  - Six-level model.  
(ACL 6 – normal cognitive abilities; ACL 1 – needs 24/7 care)
  - Focus on losses and remaining abilities.



2

## Teepa Snow's Gems™ Levels



- Focus on what remains possible.
- Six gems levels: sapphire, diamond, emerald, amber, ruby, pearl.
- Key Points:
  - Abilities are ever-changing.
  - Levels may fluctuate daily.
  - May display behaviors from more than one level.
  - Focus on the positive.
  - *Note:* If there is a sudden change in levels, medical team should be alerted.



3

## Sapphire



- True blue.
- “Normal” aging – no dementia.
- Slower processing, but abilities still intact.
- Able to learn new things, but may require extra effort.
- **Care partner focus:** Do not rush; stick to the tried and true; and try to minimize distractions.



4

## Diamond



- Many facets.
- Cognition can be clear and sharp; can SHINE.
- Prefers routine; may resist change.
- May appear stubborn or forgetful to family; can be cutting and rigid.
- May share the same stories over and over again.
- Needs repetition to absorb new information.
- **Care partner focus:** Be flexible with approaches and expectations; be attentive listeners; avoid arguing and scolding.



5

## Emerald

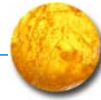


- No longer independent.
- Makes mistakes; unable to fix.
- Either wants to be in charge or follow lead of another.
- Unaware of how much guidance is required; need to feel competent.
- Increased decline in language and comprehension.
- "Time-traveling."
- May begin to neglect personal care.
- **Care partner focus:** "Choose your battles"; use visual cues and prompts; validate needs and support feelings.



6

## Amber



- Lives in a moment in time.
- Focused on sensation.
- Exploration without safety awareness.
- Unable to delay gratification.
- Hard to connect and spend quality time.
- **Care partner focus:** Use their behaviors to guide your responses; join their reality; remember the senses; simplify, simplify, simplify.



7

## Ruby



- Big movements still possible; fine motor skills limited.
- Able to copy others, but unable to understand.
- Vision becomes monocular; depth perception diminished.
- Unable to change gears easily.
- Needs gradual (step-by-step) guidance and visual cues.
- Enjoys rhythm, singing, prayer, dance.
- **Care partner focus:** Go slowly; guide – don't push or force; balance schedule with times for rest/relaxation and times for activities.



8

## Pearl



- Immobile; fetal position.
- Both body and brain are failing.
- Brief moments of alertness and responsiveness.
- Connect through gentle touch and comfort.
- Interactions must be slow and very short.
- **Care partner focus:** Remain vigilant and close, but recognize importance of letting go when the time comes.



9

## Responsive Care Partners

- People living with dementia need care partners who can interpret their behaviors and determine what they want, need, and think.
- Be observant to:
  - What they show you – how they look.
  - What they say – how they sound.
  - What they do – physical actions and reactions.
- To be successful care partners we will need to let go of what was and live in the moment we are given.



10