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# Basal Stimulation: Care for All of the Senses

Seemingly simple daily activities present unimagined challenges to the people in your care with a diagnosis of dementia. I became aware of this once again when, the day before yesterday, I said to Miss Packer ‘Please sit down at the table. It’s lunchtime.’ After I said that I didn’t pay any attention to her for a while, because I had something else to do. But then I noticed that Miss Packer wasn’t sitting at the table – she was walking around the room aimlessly.

When I thought about the situation from her perspective, I realised how great the challenge in fact was – to her:

- There were a number of tables and chairs in the room. Miss Packer had to make the decision as to which table to sit at.
- The table wasn’t set, so there was nothing to suggest that a meal was on the way.
- There was no odour of food.
- There were no unmistakable sounds like the clattering of crockery.

## Basal Stimulation is Directed to All of the Senses

If there had been **relevant stimulation** of her senses Miss Packer would, undoubtedly, have better understood my request.

You should always try to address multiple senses in the person in your care so that they’ll be given as many clues as possible as to what is expected of them – even for a simple, routine activity. The concept of **basal stimulation** offers you meaningful ideas in this regard.

Basal stimulation was originally developed for people in need of

intensive care. The method is believed to **stabilise and improve** their general condition through appropriate **perception-related activities** like exercise and touching – ultimately for the benefit of their relationship to their own body. In addition, the multifaceted sensory stimulation improves their relationship to external environmental stimuli.

People with dementia – even those who are not so very badly in need of care – benefit from these approaches. Through the stimulation of the senses, the person in your care will gain a **better understanding** of their environment and will be better **capable of managing it** – especially when the sensory stimulation reawakens memories of earlier and familiar positive experiences. On page 11 you’ll find useful ideas for integrating elements of basal stimulation into the daily routine of those in your care.

## Get the Balance Right to Provide Optimal Stimulation

Be sure that your sensory activities **stimulate**, but **don’t overwhelm**, the people in your care with dementia. Too much will make them feel insecure and may even lead them to resist routine care and other interactions. On the other hand, the right amount of meaningful stimulation will assist your service user in their orientation towards and intercommunication with the outside world.

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