Alzheimer's Prevention and Resilience Workshop for Older Adults and Caregivers

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Rationale

During my work with older adults and caregivers, I observed that many individuals at risk for Alzheimer's disease (AD) and related dementias (ADRD) are unaware of strategies that can reduce cognitive decline. Older adults often face barriers such as limited knowledge about brain health, lifestyle habits that may increase risk, and a lack of preparedness for potential crises.

Similarly, caregivers frequently experience stress, burnout, and uncertainty about how to manage behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) or medical crises at home. Without support, caregiver strain can lead to abrupt hospitalizations, institutionalization, or emotional crises.

This workshop is designed to address both prevention and resilience. In the first sessions, participants learn about brain health, early signs of Alzheimer's, and preventive strategies. Later sessions focus on emotional resilience for caregivers, practical cognitive exercises, and safety planning to reduce crises. By combining knowledge, practical skills, and emotional support, participants are better prepared to maintain cognitive function, prevent avoidable crises, and enhance quality of life for themselves and those they care for.

Resources from national and local Alzheimer's organizations are incorporated to provide follow-up information and ongoing support.

Workshop Plan

Session 1: Understanding Alzheimer's & Brain Health

Goal:
To understand Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and lifestyle factors that support brain health.

Objectives:

- Participants will identify common early signs of cognitive decline.
- Participants will list lifestyle habits that may prevent or slow cognitive decline.
- Participants will connect personal behaviors to long-term cognitive health.

Methods:

- "Brain Health Check" Worksheet: Participants evaluate daily habits (nutrition, sleep, exercise, cognitive activities) and identify areas for improvement.
- Discussion: Share findings from the worksheet, discuss what changes might be feasible, and connect habits to prevention of Alzheimer's.
- Interactive Presentation: Overview of Alzheimer's disease, BPSD, and common crisis triggers.

Session 2: Cognitive Stimulation & Memory Exercises

Goal:
To enhance cognitive resilience and strengthen memory, attention, and problem-solving skills.

Objectives:

- Participants will practice memory and attention exercises.
- Participants will create a personalized plan for weekly cognitive stimulation.
- Participants will recognize which activities provide cognitive benefit.

Methods:

- Memory Games: Word recall, matching games, and storytelling chains.
- Problem-Solving Tasks: Puzzles, planning exercises, or scenario-based challenges.
- Goal Setting: Participants create a "Brain Exercise Schedule" with 15–20 minutes of daily cognitive activities.

Session 3: Stress Reduction & Caregiver Resilience

Goal:
To provide caregivers with strategies to reduce burnout and improve emotional resilience.

Objectives:

- Caregivers will identify personal stressors and warning signs of burnout.

- Caregivers will learn and practice mindfulness or relaxation techniques.
- Caregivers will explore coping strategies and support resources.

Methods:

- Guided Mindfulness or Breathing Exercise: 5–10 minutes focusing on the present moment.
- Role-Playing Activity: Practicing responses to common BPSD (agitation, sundowning, wandering).
- Discussion & Resource Sharing: Introduce caregiver support services, helplines, and respite options.

Session 4: Safety Planning & Crisis Prevention

Goal:
To improve preparedness for medical and behavioral crises at home.

Objectives:

- Participants will identify common safety risks (falls, wandering, medication issues).
- Participants will develop an individualized crisis response plan.
- Participants will explore environmental and behavioral strategies to reduce emergencies.

Methods:

- Home Safety Walkthrough/Discussion: Identify potential hazards and solutions.
- “Crisis Response Plan” Worksheet: Include emergency contacts, warning signs, and action steps.
- Discussion: Strategies for environmental modifications, non-pharmaceutical interventions, and rapid-response support services.

Helpful Websites & Resources

Alzheimer's Association – Brain Health & Prevention Tips
Provides lifestyle strategies, risk-reduction tips, and caregiver support.
https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/what-is-dementia/brain_health

National Institute on Aging (NIA) – Preventing Cognitive Decline
Offers evidence-based suggestions for diet, exercise, cognitive stimulation, and social engagement.
https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-can-do-prevent-alzheimers

The ARK of SC – Caregiver Support & Alzheimer's Education
Provides workshops, caregiver training, memory screenings, and wellness programs.
https://www.arkofsc.org

Memory and Aging Center (UCSF) – Brain Health Resources
Offers practical guidance on lifestyle changes, cognitive exercises, and early intervention.
https://memory.ucsf.edu

Hopkinson, J., King, A., Young, L., et al. (2021). *Crisis management for people with dementia at home: Mixed-methods case study research to identify critical factors for successful home treatment.*

Tampi, R. R., Bhattacharya, G., & Marpuri, P. (2022). *Managing Behavioral and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD) in the Era of Boxed Warnings.*

Yates, J. A., Stanyon, M. R., Redley, M., & Coleston-Shields, D. M. (2020). *Conceptualizing dementia crisis and preferences for resolution: A public perspective.*