Examples of Cognitive Activities

Introducing the Cognitive Therapeutics Method™

brought to you by Home Care Assistance

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How the Cognitive Therapeutics Method Works

A Program Designed to Boost Mental Acuity

Home Care Assistance pioneered the Cognitive Therapeutics Method™ (CTM), an activities-based, cognitive stimulation program, to help older adults stay mentally sharp and independent. Activities were developed by our dedicated research team led by a neuropsychologist after more than a year of reviewing relevant research. The program is consistent with the growing understanding of neuroplasticity, or the brain’s ability to form new connections throughout life and even into late adulthood, and how cognitive stimulation aids in the process. Combined with other positive behaviors like healthy diet and exercise, CTM is designed to promote brain health and improve overall quality of life.

CTM-certified caregivers receive extensive training on the research basis of the program as well as how to use every activity, so they can easily engage clients one-on-one in their residences. The program is designed for everyone – from those who are cognitively healthy and want to maintain their mental acuity to those with deficits in cognitive functioning that are interfering with quality of life. Now your loved one can enjoy the benefits of cognitive stimulation with the same caregiver that already helps him or her maintain independence at home.

What are cognitive activities and how do they work?

This guide will introduce you to some of the activities employed by the CTM program and how they stimulate areas of the mind that tend to decline with age. Best of all, you will see just how enjoyable the program can be!

“My mother has suffered from the effects of a stroke for almost three years. Regular cognitive therapy visits have greatly changed her attitude and demeanor. She is happier and more communicative and coherent.”

—C.P., Client
CTM activities were designed to be fun and effective so that a trusted Home Care Assistance caregiver can easily implement the program with any client.

Caregivers receive comprehensive, in-person training as well as follow-up and online training through our Home Care Assistance University. They are actively supported by a team of Employee Care Managers and use a suite of tools to successfully implement each activity in the program, including an Instructions and Answers Guide.

Home Care Assistance is the only home care agency to offer cognitive exercises in addition to support with activities of daily living, including transportation, personal care, light housekeeping and companionship. Our goal is to help seniors maintain optimal independence, health and happiness at home; improving their mental acuity is just one more way we can enhance our clients’ quality of life.

Home Care Assistance is also committed to supporting the families of loved ones with cognitive issues. Whether you or your loved ones wish to take a preventive approach to cognitive health or are currently experiencing symptoms of decline, our offices are resource centers. We offer educational tools to help family members care for their loved ones as their caregivers utilize CTM activities.
A Cognitive Stimulation Program That Works More Than Just Memory!

Cognitive Therapeutics Method activities target the five primary domains of the mind.

While memory issues tend to be among the first signs of cognitive decline, memory is just one of the cognitive functions affected by neurocognitive disorders. Our proprietary CTM activities not only stimulate memory, but also executive functioning, attention, language and visual-spatial perception.

Executive Functioning includes cognitive abilities such as reasoning, problem solving, judgment and thought flexibility

Attention refers to the ability to focus on a specific piece of information for a long period of time while ignoring competing distractions

Language refers to the ability to execute verbal functions including spontaneous speech, speech repetition, speech comprehension, naming, reading and writing

Visual-Spatial Perception involves the ability to accurately perceive an object’s physical location and understand relationships between objects

Memory refers to the ability to retain information and utilize it later

Research suggests that cognitive stimulation can slow the progression of cognitive decline and delay the onset of new symptoms. Because CTM is designed to boost brain health for clients at all levels of cognitive functioning, activities have varying levels of difficulty. Thus, caregivers are able to adjust activities to each individual client’s needs and interests to ensure they are effective and enjoyable.

Since the goal of each activity is to engage the various domains of the mind, we don’t place an emphasis on finding the “right answer”, but instead focus on the thought process. We strive to make sure the client is always having fun, feeling confident and exercising each cognitive function, regardless of whether or not he or she has the correct response.
Conceptual Ordering prompts the client to arrange images in a logical order, starting with the first step in the process and ending with the final product. In the example to the right, wheat is made into flour, which is then incorporated into dough, which is then baked into bread.

With Lacing Cards, clients follow prompts from his or her caregiver to form various patterns using a two-toned shoelace. This activity again involves thinking through and executing logical steps to reach a goal.

Remember, for both of these examples and all of the CTM activities, the focus is on the thought process, not whether or not the client reaches the end goal by organizing the steps in the right order.

Executive Functioning is the mind’s ability to reason, solve problems, use judgment and make changes in order to navigate different tasks and situations. Simply put, it allows the mind to piece together multiple steps in a logical order to accomplish a goal. When executive functioning is impaired, people may be unable to handle complicated situations, find solutions to problems or compromise, which can often lead to frustration, withdrawal and even aggression.

The two activities on the right are designed to exercise the ability to plan and reach goals, large and small.
In **Block Tapping**, the caregiver taps shapes in a certain order and then the client is instructed to repeat the sequence. Even if the client cannot recreate the tapping pattern precisely, his or her focus on the tapping itself engages the attention domain.

In the **Find the Items** activity, clients are instructed to point to specified items on a given page. For example, a client may be asked to find the cats, which requires him or her to ignore the other images on the page. We encourage each client to take his or her time and look carefully, whether or not all items are found.

Focusing on a task or information can be made easier by stimulating and training the attention domain. Addressing the attention domain is crucial because missing out on important information could potentially put the client in danger.

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**Attention** is the mind’s ability to channel all focus on one thing while blocking out any other stimuli. When the mind’s attention faculty is strong, it can prioritize certain thoughts in order to finish a task, solve a problem, or reach a goal. When this function declines, people become easily distracted and may be unable to complete simple tasks as a result. This can become very frustrating to the person and his or her loved ones since he or she often becomes more dependent on others.

The following are two examples of activities our caregivers use to help strengthen attention in our clients.
Language abilities are essential to communication and thus, our connections with others. Deficits often result in withdrawal and can range from forgetting the meaning of words or phrases to not being able to communicate with words at all - spoken, read or written.

The following activities are examples of exercises caregivers can use to engage clients’ language abilities.

In the **Rhyming** activity, clients are prompted to match items from the left column with their rhyming counterparts in the right column. For example, in the picture to the right, phone would be matched with bone. Even if clients cannot identify the rhyming objects immediately, they exercise the language domain by merely identifying and describing each object.

**Categorical Scrambles** is an example of a more challenging language activity. The client is asked to decode a series of scrambled words. As an added challenge, he or she is then prompted to identify the word that does not fit within the specified category. For example, if we unscramble the choices under “Seasons” on the right, we get “summer,” “fall,” “spring,” “winter” and “valley,” and can identify that “valley” is the word that does not belong.

The language activities range in difficulty and some can be quite challenging. We designed the activities to prompt thought and discussion around the task so the language domain is activated, whether or not the client solves the problems correctly.
The following are two examples of activities designed to stimulate visual-spatial perception.

In Design Copy, the client is asked to draw a copy of a figure, such as the one to the right, shown to him or her. The focus is not on accuracy or artistic ability, but rather the exercise of observing and recreating what is shown.

The Visual Puzzles activity includes a number of line-drawings broken up into pieces and jumbled. The client is asked to identify what is made when the pieces are put back together. The example to the right is a guitar. Images range in difficulty, making the activity customizable to the client so that he or she never feels overwhelmed or defeated.

Visual-spatial perception is a component of cognition that can be easy to overlook, but can have a significant impact on quality of life.
In Picture Details, the client is prompted to look at an image for a set amount of time. The image is then hidden and the client is asked some questions about the details of the picture that was just shown. Images and questions vary in difficulty so the activity can be customized for each client.

Memory Cards is similar to the common childhood game, Memory. This activity uses a deck of cards with matching sets of pictures. A few pairs are selected by the caregiver, shuffled and placed upside down. The client is then instructed to turn over two at a time and collect all the matches. He or she must remember the location of given images in order to find the pairs quickly. This activity can be made more or less challenging depending on the number of cards used.

Many cognitive programs focus simply on memory or only a few domains of cognitive functioning. CTM, on the other hand, engages all of the primary domains of the mind. This holistic approach leads to optimal engagement for each client.

The Memory domain is the component of cognition that most people think of when they think of cognitive decline associated with Alzheimer’s or another form of dementia. Typical age-related declines in memory include minor forgetfulness, such as not remembering why you entered a room or where you left your keys. When deficits become severe enough to interfere with daily living, an underlying neurodegenerative disorder is likely at play.

Memory changes can be frustrating and for those with a form of dementia, they can be life-altering. Thus, exercising this domain is crucial. The next page features two examples of the fun activities CTM uses to engage the memory domain.
“[Since starting the program, my wife] has begun reading the newspaper on occasion, loves working on jigsaw puzzles again, spends time actually preparing meals by herself, does most of clothes washing on Monday and has started picking out the clothes she wants to wear plus more too numerous to mention.”

— G.D., Client

Why Cognitive Activity Matters

Cutting-edge scientific research, including the ACTIVE study funded by the National Institutes of Health, suggests that drug-free, cognitive stimulation can result in long-term benefits of decreased functional decline.

Research over the past few decades has advanced the understanding of neuroplasticity and we now know that the brain can adapt throughout life. Neuroplasticity refers to the brain’s ability to reorganize itself in response to injury or disease. Thus, the brain can compensate for functional loss by re-mapping connections or creating new ones. In order for these connections to be maintained, they must be stimulated through cognitive activity.

This need for cognitive activity is why healthcare professionals and families alike are excited that CTM is now available to clients - in the comfort of home!

Our Hope for the Cognitive Therapeutics Method

Home Care Assistance has been the leading provider of in-home care for seniors since 2003. Our goal is to provide seniors with a top tier standard of care, and to that end, we are constantly creating innovative programs that improve the lives of aging adults. To take advantage of the latest research suggesting that mental stimulation is associated with slower cognitive decline, we decided to develop a science-based cognitive stimulation program that can be administered one-on-one in the comfortable home environment.

We hope that your loved one can benefit from non-pharmacological cognitive intervention with a CTM-trained caregiver from Home Care Assistance. Improving the mental functioning of our valued clients is just one more way we can help seniors live well at home and change the way the world ages.

Do not hesitate to call us at 1-866-454-8346 for more information about the benefits of CTM.