

Destigmatizing Dementia: Symptom and Impact on Community

Setting: In a classroom

Subject: Biology - Neuroscience - Health

Grade Level: 7th-12th grade

Time Frame: 60 min (20 min without sensory activity)

Student Objectives:

1. Understand that the symptoms of dementia are not a normal part of aging
2. Learn about the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease
3. Experience what it is like living with dementia

Materials:

1. Set of slides on normal aging versus Alzheimer's disease
2. Videos from: <http://www.awalkthroughdementia.org/>
3. Overview of sensory experience using household items to depict what it's like living with dementia

Background:

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to learn how the brain changes across the lifespan and gain an understanding of normal signs of aging versus the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease. The videos will provide a window into what it's like living with dementia. Through the supplemental sensory activity, students will have the opportunity to experience firsthand some of the challenges associated with daily activities when living with dementia.

What to know before you teach:

This information is primarily for the teacher's background knowledge and the slides are for students. Ample notes are provided for each slide.

- Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. Although our cognition changes as we age, any changes that interfere with daily life should be evaluated by a doctor.
- In the graphic, the life stages are as follows (from left to right): infant, child, teenager, young adult, older adults (both man and woman).
- Students may put one of the warning signs of Alzheimer's on one of the developmental stages. For example putting "Hard for them to have a conversation" next to the infants. Use this as an educational opportunity "While it's true babies can't hold a conversation, we don't expect them to be able to. But we do expect an adult to be able to have a conversation. When an adult has difficulty holding a conversation, this is a warning sign of Alzheimer's disease".
- You can either structure the matching activity by clicking on one of the circles and asking students where it should go, or let them have more independence and lead it themselves.

Procedure:

1. Now that Module 1 has taught us more about the brain changes associated with Alzheimer's disease, let's gain a better understanding of some of the warning signs and symptoms associated with this brain disease.
2. Go through slides with brain function across the lifespan activity.
3. Next show one of the videos about what it's like living with dementia (instructions at bottom of webpage).
4. If time allows, have the class experience the sensory activity.

Additional Resources:

- **Additional Reading on 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's disease:** https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/10_signs
- **Approaching Memory Loss Concerns:** <https://alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/memory-loss-concerns>
- **Books and Links for teens:** Supplemental materials from alz.org