



insights **EMERGE**

with the exchange of

NEW IDEAS.

2016 APA Annual Convention

Denver, CO | August 4–7, 2016



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Applied Lifespan Developmental
Psychology: Lessons From
Montessori and Neuropsychology



Applied Lifespan Developmental Psychology: Lessons From Montessori and Neuropsychology

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The Problem with “Problematic Behavior” in Persons with Dementia

THERAPEUTIC NIHILISM

- The belief that, because a person has dementia, he or she cannot learn, cannot improve, cannot be helped.
- All that is possible is to be patient with them and deliver palliative care.
- Just keep them busy.

“Knowing what we must do in neither fundamental nor difficult, but to comprehend which presumptions and vain prejudices we must rid ourselves of ... is most difficult.”

-- **Maria Montessori**

“Problematic Behavior” in Persons with Dementia

- We assume that human behavior is not random.
- When confronted with “problematic” behavior, we must always ask “WHY is this happening?”
 - The answer CANNOT be “Because they have dementia.”

“Problematic Behavior” in Persons with Dementia

- Jiska Cohen-Mansfield suggests that “problematic behavior” is the result of attempts to meet basic human needs that are currently not being met.

“But if we observe them closely, we notice that they do not listen to the answers given them, but simply keep repeating the questions. What seems to be an eager curiosity is in reality a means of keeping a person they need near at hand.”

-- **Maria Montessori**

“If a person flees from a place, it is because he has not found in it that which he needs; yet he can always return if there is a change in the environment from which he fled.”

-- **Maria Montessori**

“If we have neither sufficient experience nor love to enable us to distinguish the fine and delicate expressions of the (person’s) life, if we do not know how to respect them, then we will perceive them only when they are manifested violently.”

-- Maria Montessori

DECLARATIVE MEMORY: An Impaired System

- Episodic memory
 - past events, autobiographical information
- Semantic memory
 - world knowledge, concepts, vocabulary

CAN retrieve some information through appropriate cueing.

“The greatest source of discouragement is the conviction that one is unable to do something.”

-- Maria Montessori

“Help those who are in search of activity and cannot find it.”

-- Maria Montessori

“We take note of all the details of a disease and yet make no account of the marvels of health.”

-- Maria Montessori

PROCEDURAL MEMORY

PRESERVED ABILITIES IN DEMENTIA

- Habits
- Location learning/Environmental Cueing
- Motor learning
- Classical condition
- Repetition priming
 - The ability to improve performance after initial exposure to information

A Daughter's Visit



RETROGENESIS: First-in/Last out Model of Cognitive Losses in Dementia

- Based on the work of Barry Reisberg, MD
- Assumes that in later stages of dementia, cognitive abilities are lost in REVERSE order they were acquired in childhood
- Examples are based on Piagetian theory and staging
 - OBJECT PERMANENCE
 - Appears in first year of life
 - Is maintained late into the course of dementia
 - SELF RECOGNITION IN THE MIRROR

ASSESSMENT

- We have developed an assessment tool using of Montessori-Based activities
 - the MU/MAS.

Maria Montessori

- Worked with children of lower economic status in the early part of the 21st century in Rome
- Designed educational activities for children *based on the abilities they had available*
- First to create environments to accommodate the physical and mental capabilities of children

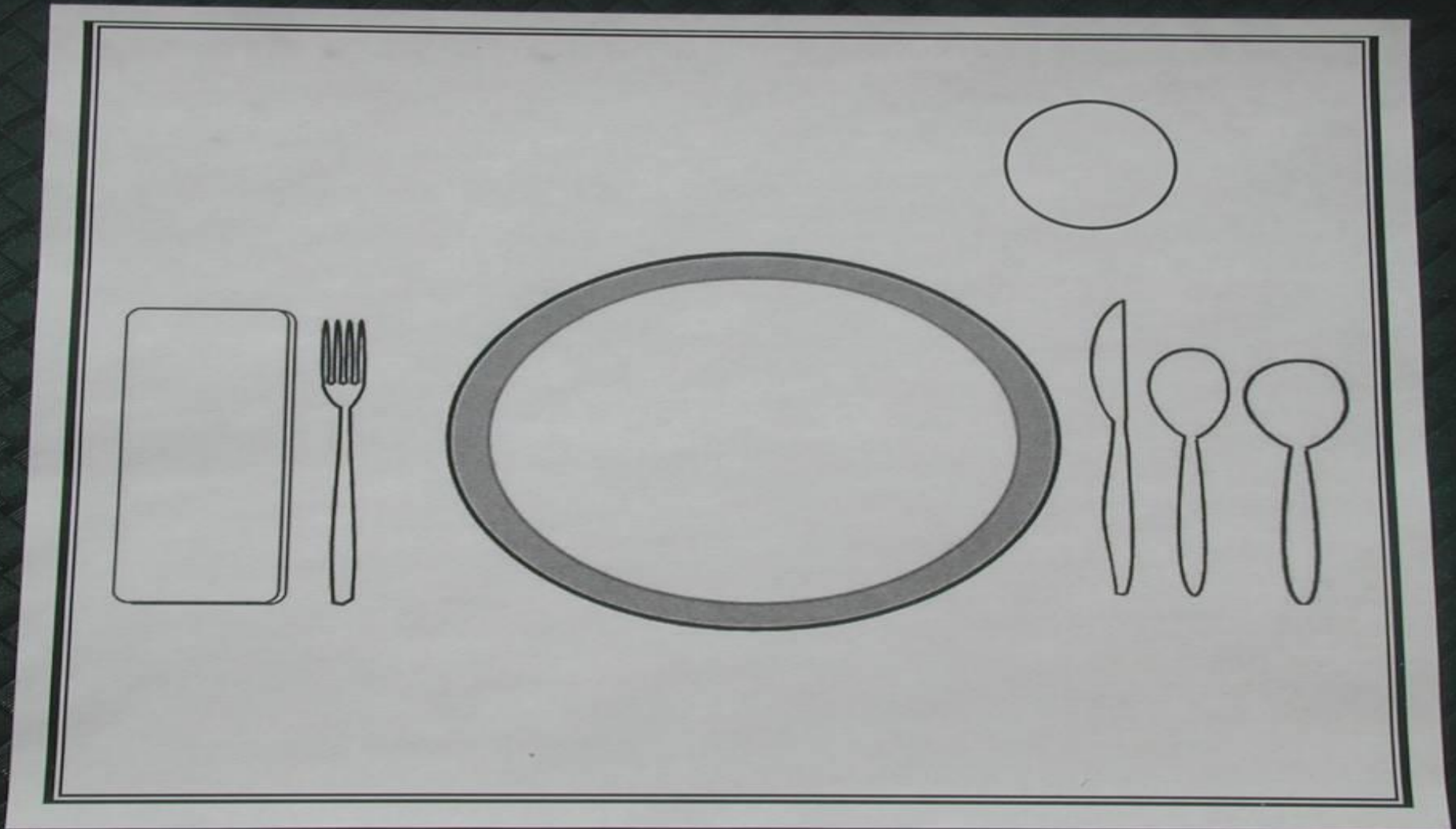
“Their faces were expressionless,
their eyes bewildered as if they
had never seen anything before
in their lives.”

-- Maria Montessori

Montessori-based Tasks

- USE EVERYDAY MATERIALS
- PROVIDES
 - Structure and order
 - immediate feedback
 - high probability of success
 - repetition
 - task break down

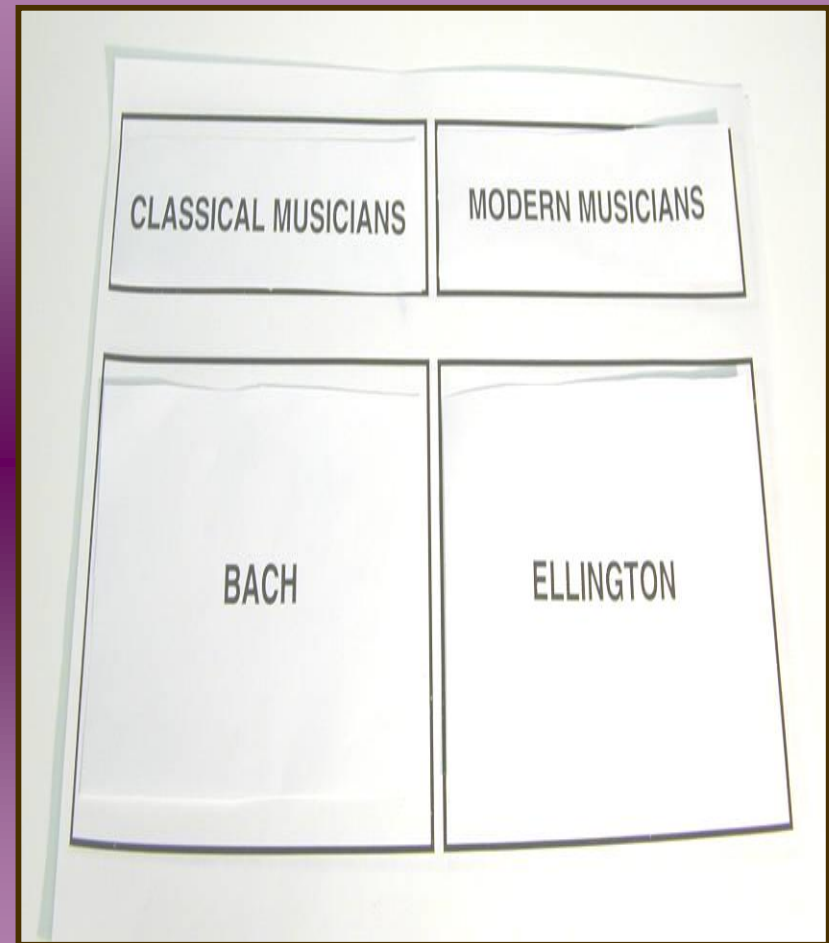
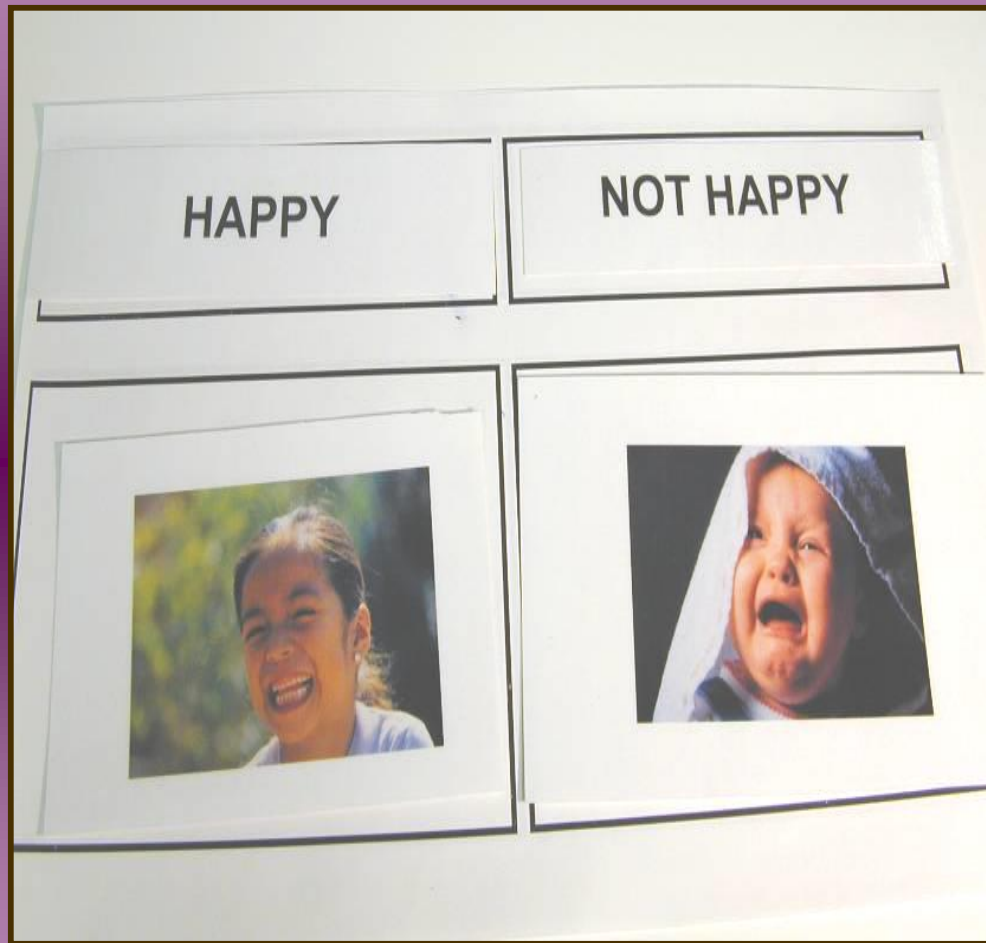
Use of Template



Use of Template



Category Sorting



PARALLELS: Montessori-Based Activities & Rehabilitation

- Circumvent deficits
- Allow independent functioning
- Engage in meaningful activity
- Provide feedback and success
- Enhance self-esteem
- Let function at highest possible level
- Provide meaningful social roles

Montessori-based Activities Create Meaningful Social Roles

- If we are to create a sense of community and a social model of care delivery for persons with dementia in long-term care settings, we must create meaningful social roles.

“A social change of this type cannot come from the ideas or energies of individual reformers but from a slow and steady emergence of a new world in the midst of the old...”

-- **Maria Montessori**

Thank You

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