



Welcome to Intensi-tea

Stress and distress
in dementia



youngdementianetwork.org/our-webinars

Introductions

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Session outline

- What is stress and / or distress?
- Symptoms
- Causes
- Fight or flight
- Time intensity model
- Discussion with two family carers
- Reducing the stress





What is stress and distress?



Challenging behaviour*

Or

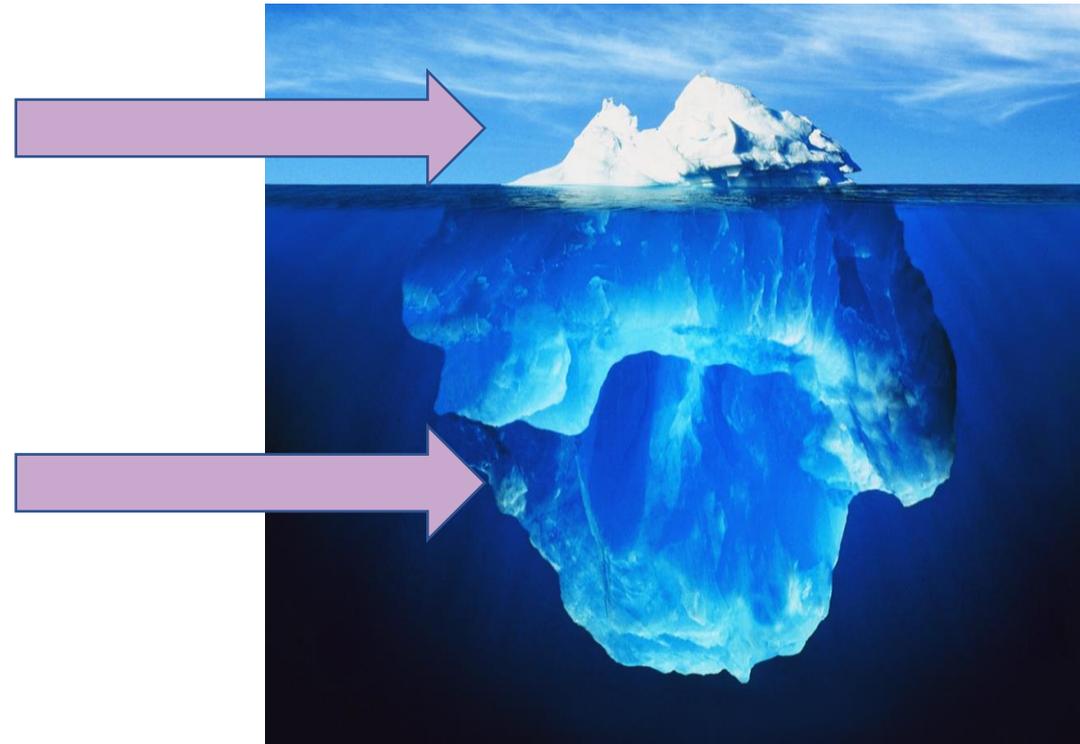
Reactions to stress in the person's world
and the distress this causes?

* A term still in use. You may also hear 'behaviours that challenge.'

Distressed behaviour is the tip of the iceberg

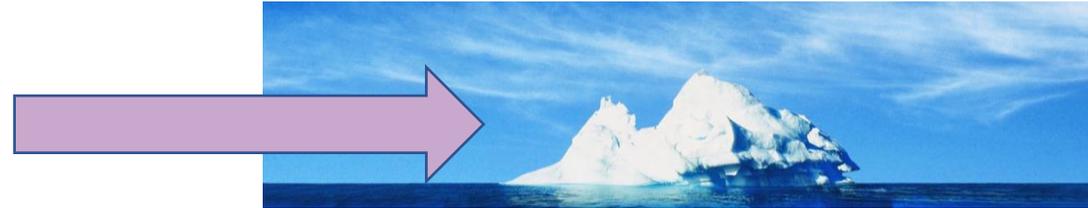
What you see - the signs and symptoms - are just the tip of the iceberg

To understand and manage it, you need to look beneath the surface



Distressed behaviour is the tip of the iceberg

What you see - the signs and symptoms of stress or distress



- Repetitive / obsessive behaviour or speech
- Aggressive
- Disruptive
- Verbally abusive
- Self-injurious
- Anti-social or illegal behaviour
- Withdrawn

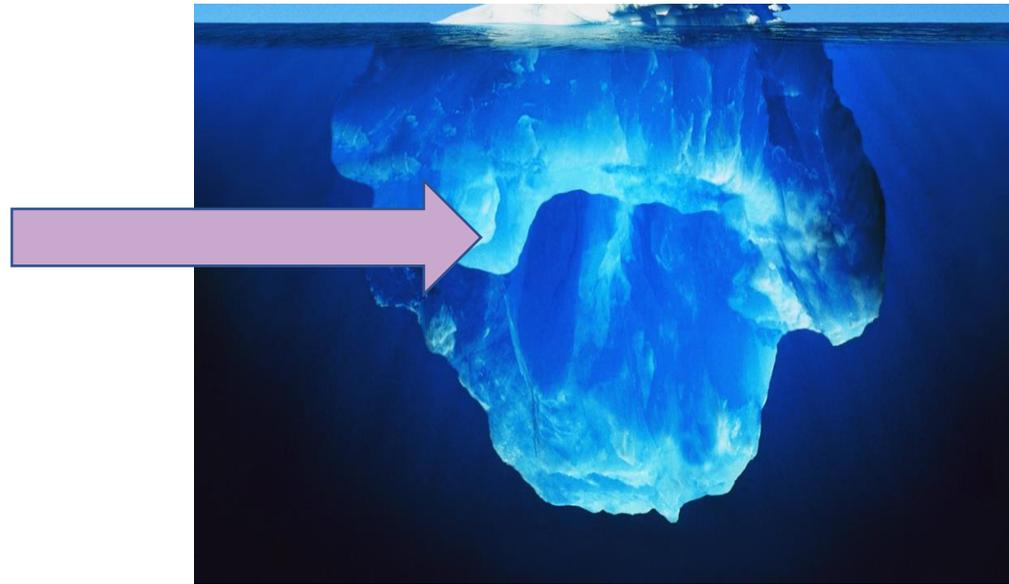
What this may look like



- Inconsolable crying
- Arguing
- Swearing
- Non-compliance
- Spitting, hitting or shouting
- A need to walk
- Repetitive questioning or behaviour
- Withdrawing
- Delusional beliefs

What's beneath the surface?

To understand and
manage, you need to look
beneath the surface
Intrinsic v extrinsic



Possible causes of stress and distress



Beliefs

I'm still in my 20s and I need to go to work

Medication related issues

Drug interactions and side effects

Mental health status

Anxiety / mood depression / psychosis

Perceptual deficits

Visual / auditory / tactile

Premorbid personality traits

Physical difficulties

Cognitive / neurological status

Changes in reasoning, planning, memory, communication

Metabolic changes

Impacting on appetite, energy, irritability

Environmental setting

Is the environment supportive?
How does the carer interact?

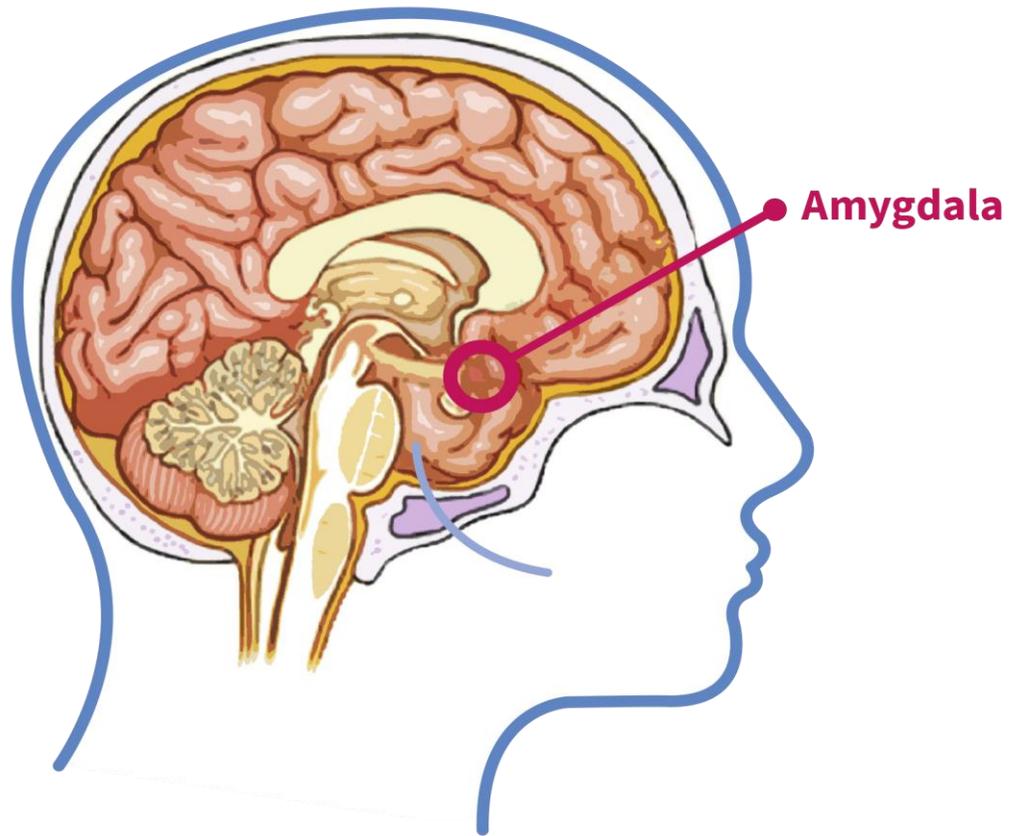


Feelings of stress can trigger primitive reactions and responses both in excitement or in fear

The fight or flight response
A drive to survive

Note: can happen in excitement as well as in fear

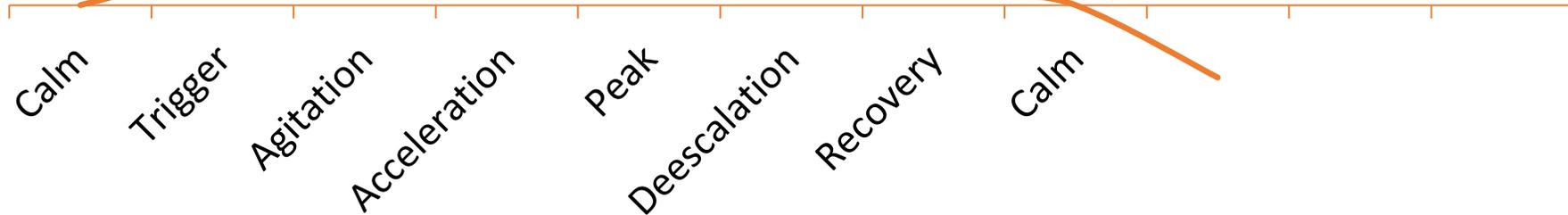
Fight or flight?



Amygdala is the emotional response centre that is scanning for threats

Time intensity model

Emotional Intensity



Time



Time intensity model

Emotional Intensity



Why is it more difficult for a person with dementia to 'calm down'?

- The person has a heightened state of physiological arousal
- The feelings have overtaken and become big and lose their perspective
- This can affect the sense of control and it's scary to have a loss of control
- Thinking straight is impossible. They are in 'the heat of the moment' and the cortical weakening is leading to 'a drive to survive' or distressed behaviour



Discussion

Reducing the stress (for both of you)

Golden rules

- Avoid confrontation
- Don't argue about facts
- Clarify and comfort



Moving forward – settling the fight / flight and reducing stress

- Validate emotions
- Use calming voice
- Body language / personal space
- Sensitivity
- Reassurance – meet the emotional need
- Look after yourself
- Think about the environment eg noise
- Can the trigger be removed?

Looking after yourself

- Self-care
- Sense of self
- Relationships
- Development
- Belonging





Thank you for joining us



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