



Family Caregiver Education Series

Teepa Snow's GEMS® Brain Change Model



Gia Barsell

**Manager of Dementia Services
and Education**

PAC™ Advanced Dementia Trainer
and Consultant



Debbie Emerson, M.S.

Community Health Educator
CARES® Dementia Specialist
National Council of Certified
Dementia Practitioners

Stages of Dementia

- ◆ Standard dementia scales focus on abilities lost
- ◆ Alzheimer's Association Stages
 - ◆ Three-stage functional model
 - ◆ Early, middle, late
- ◆ Global Deterioration Scale (GDS)
 - ◆ Seven stage medical model (1-7)
 - ◆ Hospice is stage 7
- ◆ Allen Cognitive Levels
 - ◆ Six-level model
 - ACL 6 – normal cognitive abilities;
 - ACL 1 – needs 24/7 care)
 - ◆ Focus on losses and remaining abilities

Teepa Snow's
GEMS® Levels



- ◆ Focus on what remains possible
- ◆ State vs Stage
- ◆ Six GEMS® levels:
sapphire, diamond, emerald, amber, ruby, pearl
- ◆ Key Points:
 - ◆ Abilities are ever-changing
 - ◆ Levels may fluctuate daily
 - ◆ May display behaviors from more than one level
 - ◆ Focus on the positive
 - ◆ Note: If there is a sudden change in behavior, the medical team should be alerted

Teepa Snow's GEMS®
Name Update



- ◆ Formerly: GEMS™ State Model
- ◆ New: GEMS® Brain Change Model
 - ◆ Focuses less on “levels”
 - ◆ Recognizes that those with healthy brains can also experience different states of awareness
 - ◆ Acknowledges how our moods (states) impact not only our own behaviors, but can influence those of the person for whom we're providing care

Sapphire



- ◆ True blue
- ◆ “Normal” aging – no dementia
- ◆ Slower processing, but abilities still intact
- ◆ Able to learn new things, but may require extra effort
- ◆ **Care partner focus:**
 - Do not rush
 - Stick to the tried and true
 - Try to minimize distractions

Diamond



- ◆ Many facets; inflexible
- ◆ Cognition can be clear and sharp; can SHINE
- ◆ Prefers routine; may resent change
- ◆ May appear stubborn or forgetful to family
- ◆ Can be cutting and rigid
- ◆ May share the same stories over and over
- ◆ Needs repetition to absorb new information
- ◆ **Care partner focus:**
 - Be flexible with approaches and expectations
 - Be an attentive listener
 - Avoid arguing and scolding

Emerald



- ✦ No longer independent
- ✦ Makes mistakes; unable to fix
- ✦ Either wants to be in charge or follow the lead of another
- ✦ Unaware of how much guidance is required; still needs to feel competent
- ✦ May begin to neglect personal care
- ✦ Increased decline in language and comprehension
- ✦ "Time-traveling"
- ✦ **Care partner focus:**
 - "Choose your battles"
 - Use visual cues and prompts
 - Validate needs & support feelings

Amber



- ✦ Lives in a moment in time
- ✦ Focused on sensations
- ✦ Exploration without safety awareness
- ✦ Unable to delay gratification
- ✦ Visual abilities limited: focus on parts rather than whole
- ✦ **Care partner focus:**
 - Use their behaviors to guide your responses
 - Join their reality
 - Remember the senses
 - Safeguard their environment
 - Simplify, simplify, simplify

Ruby




- ◆ Big movements still possible; fine motor skills limited
- ◆ Able to copy others, but unable to understand
- ◆ Vision becomes monocular; depth perception diminished
- ◆ Unable to change gears easily
- ◆ Needs gradual (step-by-step) guidance and visual cues
- ◆ Enjoys rhythm, singing, prayer, dance
- ◆ **Care partner focus:**
 - Go slowly
 - Guide – don't push or force
 - Balance schedule with times for rest/relaxation and times for activities

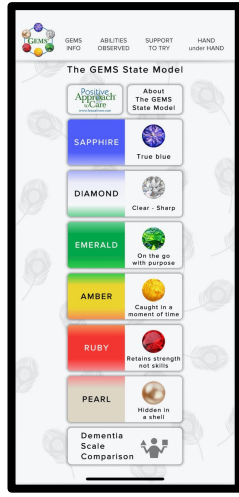
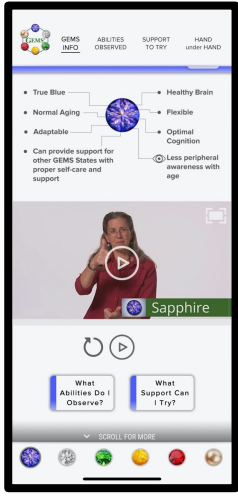
Pearl



- ◆ Immobile; fetal position
- ◆ Both body and brain are failing
- ◆ Brief moments of alertness and responsiveness
- ◆ Connect through gentle touch and comfort
- ◆ Interactions must be slow and very limited
- ◆ **Care partner focus:**
Remain vigilant and close, but recognize importance of letting go when the time comes



App for
Smart Phones
FREE!


In App Store, search for "Dementia Stages Ability Model"
– Teepa Snow's GEMS

Responsive Care Partners

People living with dementia need care partners who can:

- ◆ Interpret their behaviors and determine what they want, need, and think
- ◆ Observe . . .
 - ◆ what they show you and how they look
 - ◆ what they say and how they sound
 - ◆ what they do: their physical actions and reactions

To be successful care partners we need to let go of what was and instead live in the moments we are given.





THANK YOU!

Gia Barsell

giab@hopehospice.com

Debbie Emerson

debbiee@hopehospice.com