

MODULE 3

UNDERSTANDING THE PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY CLIENTS

Providing Independent Living Support:
Training for Senior Corps Volunteers

HANDOUT WORKSHEETS

What Are Your Concerns?

Exercise: How Would You Help
a Client in This Situation?

Exercise Situations: Explanations
and Strategies (follow-up handout)

Reflection: Next Steps

Training Feedback Survey

What Are Your Concerns?



Think about your experiences with clients and other older seniors...

Take a minute to jot down a few notes to the following questions.

1. What are some of the day-to-day challenges that older seniors you know face (i.e. physical, emotional or social challenges)?

2. What situations are you most worried about having to handle regarding the challenges from question #1?

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3. What do you want to know before you leave today?

Exercise: How Would You Help a Client in This Situation?



Instructions: Below are six situations volunteers might find themselves in. Your facilitator will assign your group 1-2 of the situations to work on. Read the assigned situation individually, and then discuss with your group:

- a. *What might be the issue or problem?*
- b. *What could you do to assist the client?*

Identify one person from your group to record your group's ideas on the easel paper provided. When time is called, be ready to share with the larger group!

Situations:

1. Your client has no real food in the house but says she doesn't need anything from the store. This is not the first time this has happened.
2. Your client's house seems to get more cluttered every week. This time the old newspapers were piled up near the space heater, although it wasn't turned on.
3. Your client has recently started smelling bad, as though he hasn't been caring for himself properly. This is the third week in a row.
4. Your client often repeats the same stories and has trouble remembering your name. However, in the last two months, it seems to have gotten progressively worse. For example, he has forgotten medical appointments he made and takes a long time to remember what he did yesterday.
5. Lately your client has started asking you for favors during hours you are not scheduled to visit. She also makes appointments that she can't keep unless someone (i.e. you) takes her (e.g. for the hairdresser, to visit a friend). She hates it when you have to leave at the end of your scheduled time together.
6. Your client appears to be having trouble with balance and you fear he will fall and hurt himself. Your client is very proud of his good physical shape at the age of 88.

Exercise Situations: Explanations and Strategies



Below are the six situations in the exercise you worked on during this session. For each of the situations, we've added some possible explanations and problem-solving strategies from program directors and other professionals that serve seniors, based their experiences. We hope you will find these tips helpful during your service.

1. Your client has no real food in the house but says she doesn't need anything from the store. This is not the first time this has happened.

What May Be Happening with the Client

- The client may not be eating regularly or not eating nutritious, healthy meals which may result in mental or physical problems.
- The client may not be taking medications as prescribed or forgetting to take them at all.
- Many clients have reduced or lost the ability to taste food, due to aging or as a side effect of medication.
- The client may have difficulty asking for help, feeling it is an imposition, or they may see it as a loss of independence.
- The client may have reservations about spending money, or may not have money to purchase groceries due to any number of things, such as higher medication costs, heating/cooling costs, gambling problems, relatives borrow money, etc.

Problem-Solving Strategies for the Volunteer

- Offer to purchase food for the client, or help find someone else who can, if the client has the necessary funds. If the client does not have the money, talk to the client about enrolling in a meal delivery or congregate meal program.
- Know the community resources for food and bring some to the client without asking. Say to the client, "I am concerned about you because you do not have any food in the house (anything to drink, any milk etc.)" or, "Are you not feeling well? Are you eating somewhere else?"
- Suggest a trip to the grocery store or tie grocery shopping to another errand. Tell the client you need groceries and ask if he/she would they like to go along and pick up whatever is needed.
- Start a conversation so that you can talk about nutrition and menu planning. Ask the client, "What is your favorite meal to make? What's your favorite comfort food? Do you like to cook?" Ask if he/she would like you to help you prepare a meal.



Source: National Senior Corps Association (www.nscatogether.org)

2. Your client's house seems to get more cluttered every week. This time the old newspapers were piled up near the space heater, although it wasn't turned on.

What May Be Happening with the Client

- The client may be unable to get to the trash receptacle outside due to mobility problems.
- The client may be hoarding materials and does not feel comfortable parting with these things.
- The client does not recognize the danger of clutter.
- The client may not be aware of recycling practices.



Problem-Solving Strategies for the Volunteer

- Recycle the papers for the client or see if there is an organization (e.g. a scout troop) that recycles for fundraising purposes.
- Ask the client if he/she wants help sorting items and discarding what is not needed.
- Point out the danger of fire or tripping on the piles. Use non-judgmental language directed at safety.
- Let the client know there are other (chore provider) services available to assist in the upkeep of a house.

3. Your client has recently started smelling bad, as though he hasn't been caring for himself properly. This is the third week in a row.

What May Be Happening with the Client

The client could have issues with mobility, depression, memory loss, vision problems, medication complications, incontinence, or feeling unsafe in the tub.

Problem-Solving Strategies for the Volunteer

- Provide the client with information about community resources to help with personal care. Ask if the client would like someone to help with bathing.
- Ask the client if he/she is having any problems and whether there is anything the volunteer can do to help. Find out if the client is doing regular laundry, has enough clothes, laundry detergent, shampoo, body soap, deodorant etc. Find out if the client's washing machine is in working order, is the client having trouble with dials, etc.
- Remind the client that he/she might need to take a bath to stay healthy and clean. Suggest having grab bars installed to address safety concerns.
- If the volunteer/client relationship is close, the volunteer can say, "I'm wondering if you have been able to change your clothes as often as you had been because I've noticed there's a bit of an odor you may not be aware of. This happened to me one time and someone else told me about it- I didn't even notice it myself. Is there anything I can do to help? Maybe we can do laundry together when I come to visit."
- Odors are often related to a physical change (prolapsed bladder, prostate issues etc.) and the volunteer could talk about this; ask when the client was last seen by a doctor.



4. Your client often repeats the same stories and has trouble remembering your name. However, in the last two months, it seems to have gotten progressively worse. For example, he has forgotten medical appointments he made and takes a long time to remember what he did yesterday.

What May Be Happening with the Client

This is a very common problem that sometimes indicates the client is suffering from some form of dementia. Sometimes a change in medication can be the cause.



Problem-Solving Strategies for the Volunteer

- Listen to the client and be patient with him/her.
- Wear a nametag.
- Give clues to help clients connect parts of something they do remember that may lead to remembering the whole story.
- Suggest using a date book as a reminder of activities, visits, or other appointments.
- Suggest the client use memory aids: a calendar with manipulatives, magnets that need to be moved from one place to another, a chart with check marks, timers, products for dispersing medications, etc.

5. Lately your client has started asking you for favors during hours you are not scheduled to visit. She also makes appointments (e.g. for the hairdresser, to visit a friend) that she can't keep unless someone (i.e. you) takes her. She hates it when you have to leave at the end of your scheduled time together.

What May Be Happening with the Client

- The client is over-dependent on the volunteer.
- The client is lonely.
- The client is having increased anxiety or increasing physical needs.



Problem-Solving Strategies for the Volunteer

- Set clear boundaries of responsibilities early on and review as needed. Set limits on the day of the first visit to the client. Explain that volunteers are only allowed to take clients places during their scheduled visit, and visits are scheduled for a certain amount of time in order to serve other clients, too.
- Remind the client that you will be back to visit him/her at your regularly scheduled time. Make a calendar so the client has a visual cue for days when volunteer will be there. Help the client make appointments for services on the days you are there.
- Help the client to become aware of other community resources that provide services.
- Have the client call the volunteer station or supervisor, and ask for permission to change the care plan (visiting schedule/hours). This helps avoid conflict between volunteer and client. Or if you think additional time is needed for the client, contact your supervisor and request more hours with this client.

6. Your client appears to be having trouble with balance and you fear he will fall and hurt himself. Your client is very proud of his good physical shape at the age of 88.

What May Be Happening with the Client

Balance problems may be due to recent change in medication, progression of a disease (e.g. Parkinson's), or just part of the normal aging process. They may also be caused by dietary issues, such as excessive intake of alcohol or caffeine.



Problem-Solving Strategies for the Volunteer

- Help the client increase awareness of the consequences of falling and safety measures to avoid falls. Encourage the client to use a cane or a walker, especially when he/she goes out, but around the house as well. Check that the cane/walker fits properly and that the client feels comfortable using it.
- Offer arm assistance when out, or suggest a wheelchair (when available) for shopping.
- Evaluate the safety of the client's home; pick up rugs, remove unnecessary objects from floor, etc. Make sure the client has a long-handled grabber for high objects or things that fall on the floor.
- Encourage the client to keep a phone with him/her, and/or wear an alert necklace, particularly if alone in the residence.
- Go for short walks outside together to encourage exercise.
- Suggest the client report this problem to his physician.

Note: *If you are worried about your client, or notice a sudden change in behavior, always notify your supervisor.*

Reflection: Next Steps



Think of a client or senior in your life who has an increasing need for help to perform daily living tasks...

Jot down some notes to the following questions and share them with a partner. This worksheet is for your own use; you do not need to turn it in.

What kind of help does this person need?

Are you able to provide the kind of help this person needs at this time?

- If YES, how will you approach this person to offer help?
- If NO, who will you contact? Is there a community service that might assist?

If he/she declines the offer of assistance, what is your plan (e.g. leave it alone for now but continue to observe, contact a supervisor, broach the subject with him/her again at a later time, enlist the help of a family member, etc.)?

Is the situation serious enough that you feel someone else should be alerted (e.g. supervisor, case manager, family member, or caregiver)? If yes, who will you contact?

Training Feedback Survey

Please help us improve our training sessions by providing feedback on the training you attended. Thank you!

Training/Session Name: _____ Date: _____

Lead Facilitator: _____

Program you serve with: SCP RSVP Other: _____

Please rate this session using the following scale:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The subject matter was presented effectively.					
2. The facilitator was knowledgeable.					
3. The facilitator responded to questions.					
4. There were enough opportunities for discussion.					
5. The written materials are useful.					
6. The session met my expectations.					
7. As a result of this training, I gained new knowledge applicable to my volunteer assignment.					
8. I plan to apply what I learned at this session.					

9. What did you like best about this session?

10. What would have improved this session?

Thank You! Your feedback will help us to improve our training!