CREATIVE CAREGIVING:

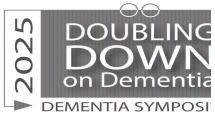
Enhancing Dementia Support Through Improv and Gamified Learning

Cloud Conrad
New Street Compass

Andy Suggs
Reckon Branding









Cloud Q. Conrad

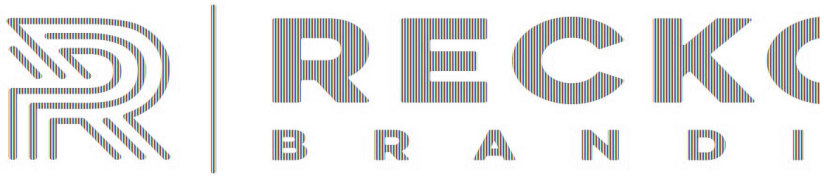
NEW STREET COMPASS

- 30-year career in advertising, marketing, and corporate training
- Founder of New Street Compass, focused on empowering dementia caregivers through instructional design
- Director of Program Development, Beyond Dementia Coalition (501c3) – leads education, marketing, and strategic planning
- Author of The Dementia Field Guide® and creator of Exploring Dementia™ training game
- Developed Georgia-compliant 16-hour memory care training for assisted living staff
- Certified Dementia Caregiver Trainer, Facilitator Trainer for the Virtual Dementia Tour®, and Alzheimer's Association Community Educator
- Dedicated to reducing stigma, promoting dignity, and fostering belonging for those living with dementia.



Andy Suggs

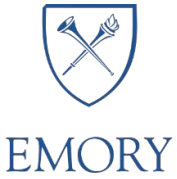
- 25 year branding and marketing career (Cloud is older!)
- Passion for defining, designing and driving brands that make a difference in our society
- Grandmother, Mother-in-law, Father-in-law, Brother-in-law all lived or live with MCI
- Strives to provide healthcare programs with the same marketing and branding strategies large corporations pay big dollars for so they can experience the support and success they deserve


RECKO
BRANDI


ALTER


APHL


detor
The New Direction In Sharing Data


EMORY


EMPOWERED
ENDINGS
Concierge Palliative & End-of-life Care


engage


FROST LAB
Restaging Aging

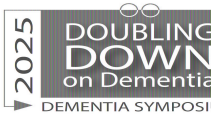

georgia
memory net


georgiagear
ENGAGING FOR BETTER HEALTH


GSA
GERONTOLOGICAL
SOCIETY OF AMERICA®


imc
Integrated Memory Care
Where Dementia is Primary


RYSE
REPRESENT. SUPPORT. ELEVATE.


2025
DOUBLING
DOWN
on Dementia
DEMENTIA SYMPOSI



2025 DOUBLING DOWN on Dementia
DEMENTIA SYMPOSI

Improv as a Caregiving Tool

Source: *“Just Join Them”: Improv and Dementia Care* by Kemp et al. (2023)

- **Improv training improves caregiver capability**: Skills like “yes, and,” active listening, accepting failure, and staying in the moment can help care partners improve engagement, empathy, and communication.

- **Positive outcomes for caregivers**: Early pilot studies report **reduced depressive symptoms and caregiver burden** after improv training.

- Improv supports the **four pillars of dementia engagement**:
  1. Knowing the person
  2. Meeting them where they are
  3. Being in the moment
  4. Seeing every encounter as an opportunity

These align directly with core improv competencies and reinforce **emotional well-being and responsiveness**, both crucial to healthy caregiving relationships.

Laughter and Humor for Personal Development

Source: *Humor for Personal Development: A Systematic Scoping Review*

- Involving over 574,000 participants across 564 studies, the review found that **humor and laughter support biological, psychological, social, environmental, and behavioral health outcomes**.

- It highlights **stress reduction, emotional regulation, and resilience-building**, all of which are highly relevant for caregivers under strain.


improv for
better caregiving

Improv for Caregiving

georgia memory net



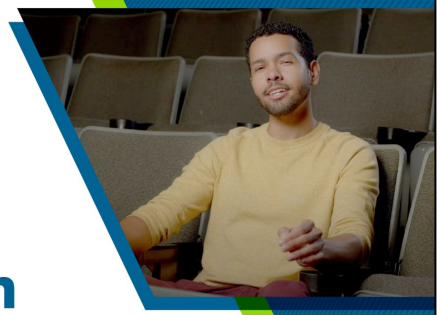
Introduction & Overview

2025 DOUBLING DOWN on Dementia DEMENTIA SYMPOSI



Improv for Caregiving

georgia memory net



STRATEGY 1

Distraction & Redirection

Improv for Caregiving

georgia memory net



STRATEGY 2

Beneficial Correction

Improv for Caregiving

georgia memory net



STRATEGY 3

Engage in Their Reality



Improv for Caregiving

georgia memory net



SCENARIO

Desire to Drive




improv
in action

Why Improv Matters in Dementia Care Training

Replicating Real-World Complexity to Build Confidence

- Improv training helps learners practice **instantaneous capacity assessment** and **spontaneous response** in realistic care scenarios
- Educators must simulate the **dynamic nature** of multi-resident care to maximize training effectiveness
- Gaming provides a **safe, risk-free space** to rehearse decisions that mirror real healthcare interactions
- *“Games can foster neurocognitive flexibility through adaptive, feedback-driven learning.”* — Band et al., 2016

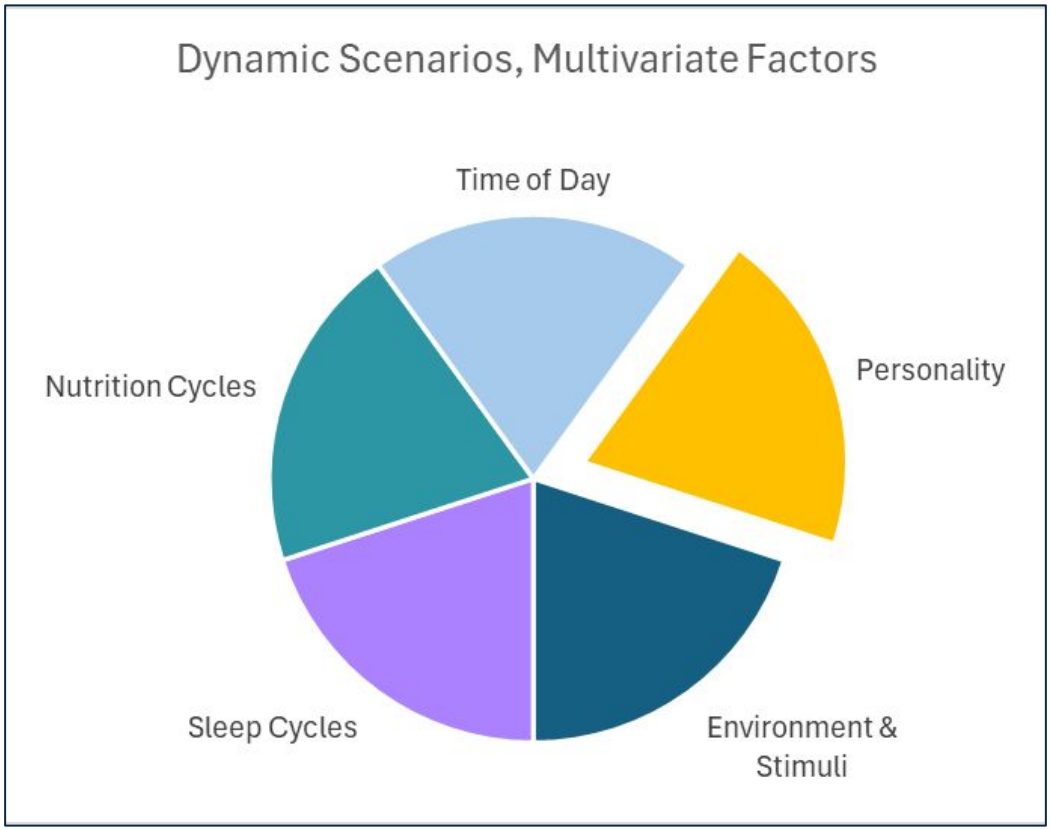

gaming for
better caregiving

Can Role Play Make Dementia Care Easier to Learn?

The Power of Contextual Characters

- Could learner outcomes improve if caregivers are given "**characters**" to embody and respond from?
- Role-based scenarios may help caregivers adopt **improv principles more easily and naturally**
- Situational, personality, and pathology-driven variations add **realism and challenge**
- *The Circles of Care Game* helped medical students strengthen **interprofessional collaboration**
  — Chan et al., 2020

Dementia Care Involves Knowledge, Skill, and Chance

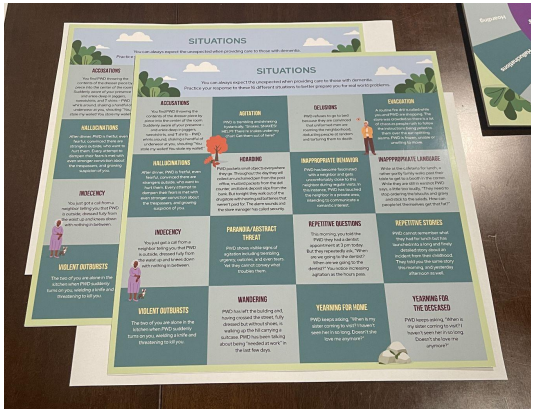


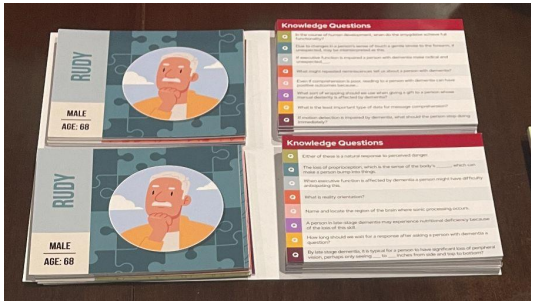
- Dementia caregiving requires solving what seems a limitless number of possible scenarios
- Scenarios driven by many changing variables
- Changing personalities increase need for on-the-fly solutions
- Caregivers need practice to gain skill at engaging extemporaneously, effectively

Exploring Dementia // Board Game





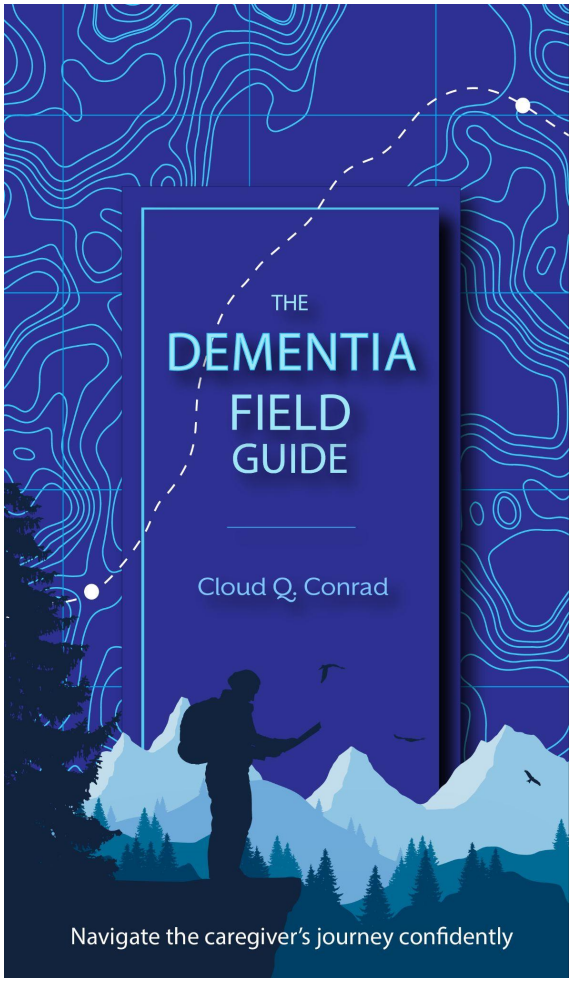




Exploring Dementia — A Game of Knowledge, Skill & Chance

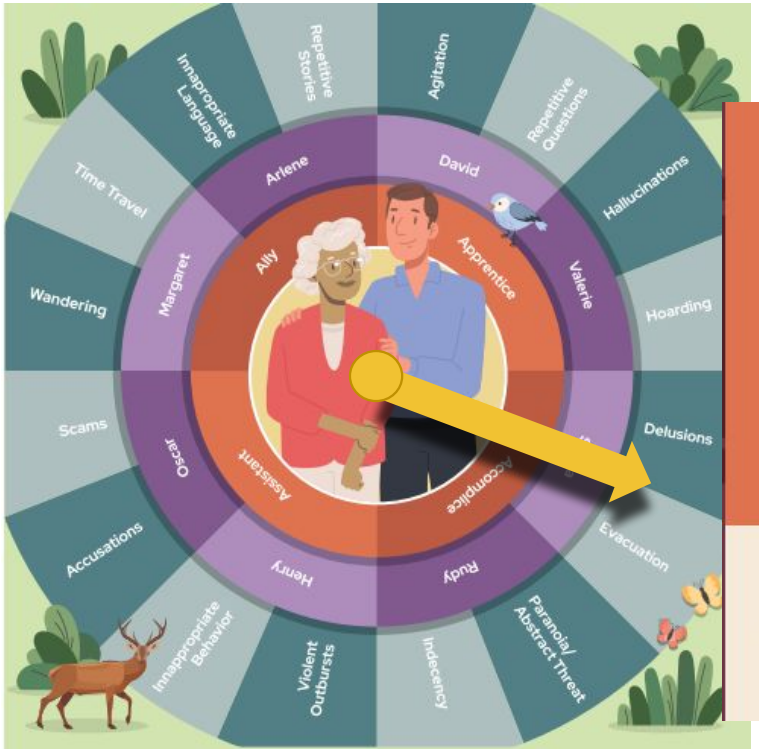
From Manual to Meaningful Practice

- A role-based, collaborative board game for dementia caregivers
- Learners apply concepts from **The Dementia Field Guide** in real-time scenarios
- Uses improv-inspired “character play” to simulate care challenges
- Reinforces person-centered principles through **spontaneous decision-making and problem solving**
- Designed to **complement formal instruction** and build confidence through guided, gamified practice



Learn Through Play

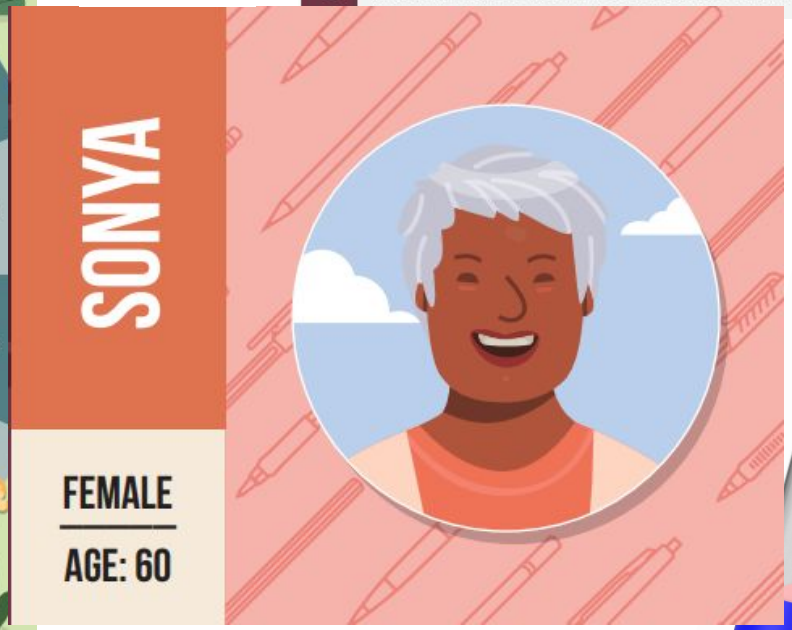
Users test knowledge and skill through low-risk, friendly competition and collaboration

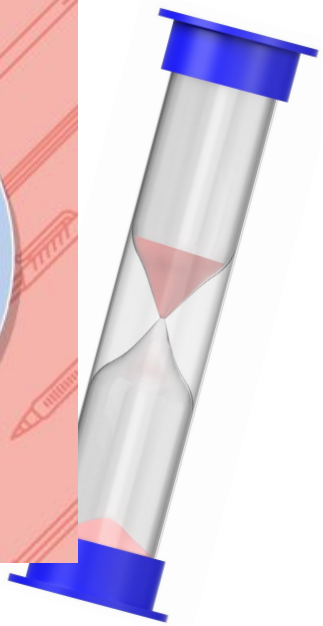




Knowledge Questions

Q	If we need to distract a person from negative stimuli, what kind of rhythmic data may be helpful?
Q	Impairment of sensory processes may make it hard for a person to detect this in their own body.
Q	What kind of cue can we use to help a person with stopping and starting tasks?
Q	New memories are embedded with this kind of data.
Q	What kind of sonic data can we use to help a person remember something?
Q	___ and ___ are the two kinds of motor skills we use.
Q	During what stage of dementia do we typically start to see problems with word loss?
Q	Name three types of data processed in the occipital lobe.





Learn Through Play

VISUAL PROCESSING	People with dementia have an ever-narrowing field of vision
LINGUISTIC SKILLS	People with dementia may only comprehend 2 or 3 out of every 4 words they hear
AUDITORY SKILLS	People with dementia respond to the rhythms of speech and of music
EXECUTIVE FUNCTION	People with dementia may have a hard time choosing from several options
ADAPTIVE SKILLS	People with dementia may lose their sense of place or time

Learn Through Play

VISUAL PROCESSING	People with dementia have an ever-narrowing field of vision
LINGUISTIC SKILLS	People with dementia may only comprehend 2 or 3 out of every 4 words they hear
AUDITORY SKILLS	People with dementia respond to the rhythms of speech and of music
EXECUTIVE FUNCTION	People with dementia may have a hard time choosing from several options
ADAPTIVE SKILLS	People with dementia may lose their sense of place or time

Knowledge Questions

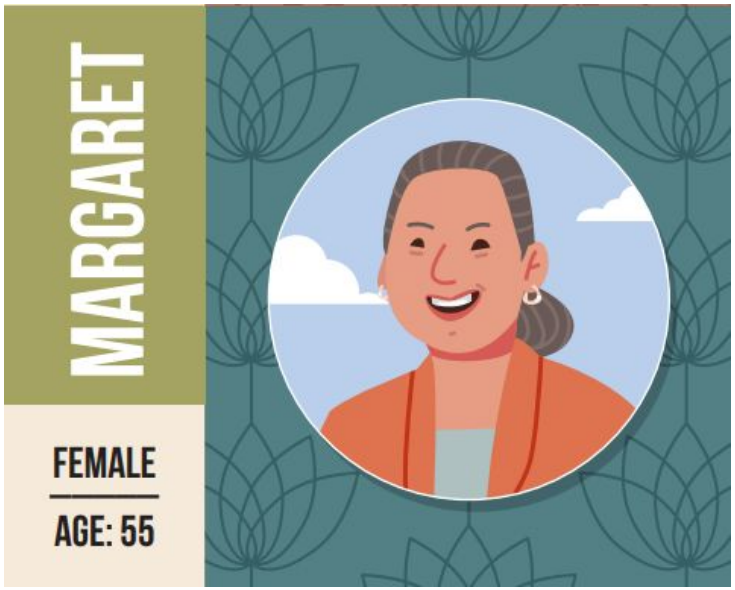
- If we need to distract a person from negative stimuli, what kind of rhythmic data may be helpful?
- Impairment of sensory processes may make it hard for a person to detect this in their own body.
- What kind of cue can we use to help a person with stopping and starting tasks?
- New memories are embedded with this kind of data.
- What kind of sonic data can we use to help a person remember something?
- ___ and ___ are the two kinds of motor skills we use.
- During what stage of dementia do we typically start to see problems with word loss?
- Name three types of data processed in the occipital lobe.

Learn Through Play

VISUAL PROCESSING	People with dementia have an ever-narrowing field of vision
LINGUISTIC SKILLS	People with dementia may only comprehend 2 or 3 out of every 4 words they hear
AUDITORY SKILLS	People with dementia respond to the rhythms of speech and of music
EXECUTIVE FUNCTION	People with dementia may have a hard time choosing from several options
ADAPTIVE SKILLS	People with dementia may lose their sense of place or time

Knowledge Questions

- Q If we need to distract a person from negative stimuli, what kind of rhythmic data may be helpful?
- Q Impairment of sensory processes may make it hard for a person to detect this in their own body.
- Q What kind of cue can we use to help a person with stopping and starting tasks?
- Q New memories are embedded with this kind of data.
- Q What kind of sonic data can we use to help a person remember something?
- Q ___ and ___ are the two kinds of motor skills we use.
- Q During what stage of dementia do we typically start to see problems with word loss?
- Q Name three types of data processed in the occipital lobe.



Summary of Benefits for Caregivers of People with Cognitive Decline

Benefit	How Improv or Humor Helps
Reduced stress	Improv mindset and laughter therapy reduce emotional burden
Better relationships	“Yes, and” mindset fosters empathy, validation, and connection
Improved engagement	Humor and spontaneity enable responsive, person-centered care
Enhanced well-being	Humorous interactions promote joy, social bonding, and resilience

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US TODAY!

Your donation helps us build dementia preparedness in our communities with impactful programs like this symposium.

PLEASE FOLLOW QR CODES TO DONATE

AND, PLEASE COMPLETE YOUR SURVEY !

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

GEORGIA CHAPTER

Beyond Dementia Coalition

2025 DOUBLING DOWN on Dementia DEMENTIA SYMPOSI

Humor & Laughter-Based Interventions

Source: *SMILE ElderClown Study*

- **ElderClown and LaughterBoss interventions in nursing homes** led to a **statistically significant reduction in agitation** over 26 weeks.
- While it didn't significantly reduce depression, the humor therapy created **more peaceful and socially engaged environments**.
- The study suggests humor can be a **first-line psychosocial intervention before medication** for agitation in dementia care.

Game-Based and Playful Interventions Support Cognitive Plasticity

Source: *Band et al., 2016*

- While not improv-specific, the research supports **game-like and playful training** for improving **working memory, attention, and motivation**—key cognitive areas affected by dementia.

- Structured, playful interaction can **bridge traditional therapy and meaningful daily engagement**.