

By now, many of us are familiar with [Teepa's GEMS<sup>TM</sup>](#). Teepa helped show us the need to focus on a person's retained abilities instead of loss as dementia progresses. Each person, much like a gemstone is unique, has many facets, and requires their own type of care to shine. When looking at this model it makes perfect sense, but do we really treat each of the GEMS<sup>TM</sup> equally?

One of the joys we have when interacting with those we care about is seeing them engaged and happy. This engagement can happen in many different ways and the bigger the better. We enjoy bingo games, baking together, putting puzzles together, and a multitude of other activities. But what about those who are no longer capable of participating in these activities? I often think of the Rubies and Pearls as the Lost GEMS<sup>TM</sup> because far too often they are parked in the TV room or left on their own. Why is that? Well, they can't play bingo anymore, they probably can't use their hands well enough to do a puzzle. But wait, did you see what just happened in that last sentence? We talked about the things they *can't* do. What did Teepa teach us about the GEMS<sup>TM</sup>? Let's focus on what they can do and what they enjoy.

What do we know about Rubies and Pearls? They like to explore the world through their five senses. While they may not be able to bake the cookies, they would enjoy the smell of the cookies baking, and we ALL love to eat them! We could also put a lavender scent in front of a fan and let it spread throughout the room. This wouldn't require an immediate processing of information but it does allow them to take in the information on their own. For a more personal interaction you could spend time applying hand lotion and provide a light hand massage. This provides the opportunity for human contact and a soothing touch. I mentioned the TV room as a negative before, but it doesn't have to be such. We know Rubies and Pearls are losing or have lost their language. We also know that their processing has slowed. So why would we think that having them parked in front of a television show with witty banter and fast moving action or local news program would be beneficial for them? One way to be to use the television in a positive way is to use a more serene program such as an exploration of the Grand Canyon accompanied by Mozart. For the last example in this section I'll want you to channel one of the times you've heard Teepa speak and try to read this in her voice: **"Language on the left and rhythm on the right. We lose on the left and retain on the right."** Were you able to do it in her voice? Did you hear the rhythm and change inflection like she does? Either way, we know that by the time they reach the Ruby or Pearl stage they won't have much, if any, language. But we aren't focusing on what they don't have, so what do they have? That's right, rhythm. Having music that they like available to them is important. Being willing to sing and dance with them in whatever way they are able is important. Prayer falls into this category as well and is important to many. You must take the time to know the person for whom you are caring to do your best to understand what they will enjoy and then pay attention and learn if their preferences have stayed the same or changed.

Another issue I see troubling the Rubies and Pearls is the idea of sundowning. I've seen it personally and heard about it from others. Around 2-3 pm they start to shout and be more aggressive. Before we jump to the conclusion that this is a part of their GEM™ state let's take a look at their day. They were probably woken up by 6-7 am so by the time 2-3 pm rolls around, they are tired. What else is happening at that time? In many facilities, that is shift change time and now the environment is chaotic and loud. When we look from this perspective we can start to understand why they are upset. What could be done to prevent this? Well I don't know about you, but when I'm tired during the day and have the opportunity, I enjoy taking a nap. Studies have shown that when people living with dementia have been given the opportunity to sleep when they are tired, instances of *aggressive behavior* shrank significantly. It seems like such an obvious solution, so why isn't it done more? Because it throws off OUR schedule. You may say "If he sleeps now he won't be able to sleep tonight" or "I need to get her showered but she's asleep". Yes, allowing them to take naps may impact your schedule, but if it allows them the rest and restoration they need to improve their quality of life, isn't that worth it? We are the ones with the fully functioning brains and able to adapt. Why are we trying to force them to change so we don't have to?

There are so many factors that go in to providing the just-right care each person needs. You will need to be willing to explore and learn what works best for the person you are working with. There are six pieces to this puzzle and only by putting each one in the right place can we make sure that all GEMS™ and each person are found and placed in the setting that helps them shine best.