

# Waterford Place

## Memory Care

### The GEMS®: Brain Change Model

At Waterford Place Memory Care a big part of the dementia training that we provide our staff comes from Teepa Snow and The GEMS® model. The GEMS® model recognizes the dynamic nature of the human brain and its abilities. Unlike other cognitive models, it acknowledges that everyone's abilities can change in a moment. Modifying environments, situations, interactions, and expectations will create either supportive positive opportunities or result in distress and a sense of failure. Just as gemstones need different settings and care to show their best characteristics, so do people. Rather than focusing on a person's loss when there is brain change, seeing individuals as precious, unique, and capable encourages a care partnership and is the core of this model. Providing supportive settings for everyone, including care providers, allows them to use what they have to be their best. The GEMS® advocate that everyone living with brain change when given the opportunity will shine. Teepa created Gems™ as a positive approach to understanding and interacting with friends, family members and patients going through the stages of dementia. Below is a list of her 7 Gems™ and description summary based on the Gems™ model.

**SAPPHIRES** "True blue, optical cognition, healthy brain"  
Sapphires represent the beginning stage of dementia. Typically in this stage, people like to choose the activities in which they participate. They are still aware of their own interests and what they enjoy. They have characteristics of normal aging, however, they may begin to have feelings of depression due changes associated with aging. Sapphires will show minimal changes in cognition and may still have the ability to learn new things with time, practice and more effort than before. This is a good time to allow your loved ones to tell you what they enjoy doing and do those things with them. Spend time together making them feel pampered and a little less "blue".

**DIAMONDS** "Clear and sharp, routines and rituals rule"  
It is important to allow diamonds to feel competent, valued, comfortable and in control. At this stage, the dementia may not only start to become noticeable to you but they may feel as if something is not right as well.

# HOPE

*for Dementia is here*

### WP MC Leadership Team

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**Ben Leavell**

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**Melinda Haight**

Director of Recreational Therapy  
**Angie Russo**

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**Kris Hartney**

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Director of Housekeeping & Laundry  
**Tim Vesterfelt**

Maintenance  
**Brian Nienhuis & Dave Horjus**

Front Desk Lead  
**Martha Kitler**



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Like diamonds they are still clear enough to do the things they always have but are very rigid struggling to process new information. Diamonds prefer old habits, routines and familiar surroundings. You may notice that he or she often repeats the same questions, stories or phrases. Do not correct them in moments of confusion and embrace their many facets. Now may be a good time to go to one of their favorite familiar places such as a restaurant, park or ice cream parlor.

**EMERALDS** “Green and on the go, naturally flawed”

The vibrant green of the naturally flawed emerald represents their desire to be on the go. They crave purpose, in a time where they are having obvious problems with communication and comprehension becoming lost in their past life, places and roles. You may notice them asking who, what, when and where often. You may also experience having your loved one accuse you of something having moments of frustration and fear. Join them in their journey if they are reliving past memories and help guide the conversation with positive words. Keep in mind that emeralds have little to no awareness of their changes in ability believing they living in reality and capable of independence even though they are not. Although they will not likely remember details of your time together, they will remember how you made them feel through tone of voice and body language.

**AMBER** “Like a particle trapped in an amber, I am caught in a moment of time.”

Ambers tend to focus on sensations and may fixate on touching and manipulating objects. Introducing soft fabrics, stuffed animals and items to sort through may bring comfort. Impatience may grow stronger at this point and being flexible with them is key. They are unable to control emotions and commonly become visibly distressed from seemingly simple things such as eating or accepting personal care. Even when Amber does not recognize you or their surrounding, they may still have the ability to take pleasure in doing activities with you such as sing-a-longs, watching things that are visually appealing or tactile experiences. Even of the act tearing tissue paper into pieces may bring comfort.

**RUBIES** “Deep and strong in color, others stop seeing what is possible”

It may appear from the outside that rubies are no longer capable of enjoyment or have the ability to interact, however, they are still able to make use of body rhythm, make big movements, notice voice rhythms and magnified facial expressions and even mimic sounds and gestures. Rubies may be able to pick up and hold items but do not expect them to know what to do with them. They count on you for your gentle guidance and protection from hazards. Even if you cannot see it, moments of joy can still exist. Rocking, swaying, humming to music, praying and even dancing may still be among the realm of possibilities.

**PEARLS** “Hidden within a shell, beautiful moments to behold”

You will see profound changes in the bodies of pearls, however inside still survives a beautiful soul. Your loved one may frequently recognize familiar sounds and caring touches. Offer comfort and understand that even though they cannot control their body and may seem to be just a shell, they can still benefit from hearing your loving voice, keeping warm and comfortable and being given permission to go when they are ready. Even though words can not be understood, reading in a pleasant tone, talking about fond memories or brushing their hair with a soft brush can be calming.

Reference Source: Teepa Snow and Positive Approach® to Care Team (<https://teepasnow.com/about/about-teepa-snow/the-gems-brain-change-model/>)

Questions? Would you like a tour?

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