

## Study: Dementia doesn't stop some talents

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U.S. scientists say dementia may rob a person of memory and focus, but the ability to offer advice about life's big questions seems to be preserved.

The Florida State University researchers say they found older adults with moderate to severe symptoms of dementia can assume advice-giving and teaching roles despite their cognitive impairments.

Assistant Professor of Psychology Katinka Dijkstra, Michelle Bourgeois, professor of communication disorders, and colleagues from Long Island and George Washington universities reached their findings in first-of-their-kind studies.

"A relatively common perception of adults with dementia in nursing homes is they are helpless and incompetent and do not have the potential to maintain a certain level of independence and ability to communicate," Dijkstra said. "Our studies show they have abilities their caregivers and family members may not even be aware of.

The researchers theorize adults with dementia are successful giving advice and teaching because they can tap into knowledge that was accumulated when they were younger and needed these skills as parents or mentors. This type of knowledge does not decline as much as memory of recent events, Dijkstra said.

The study appears in the journal *The Gerontologist*.

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