

VIRTUAL REALITY: A JOURNEY THROUGH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

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The Embodied Labs Story

- After her mother was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's, Carrie Shaw struggled to explain to caregivers the exact nature of her mother's visual impairment. Carrie modified a pair of glasses to simulate the impairment for the caregivers. Immediately, they understood what her mom was experiencing.
- Carrie understood the broader application that tools like this could have in helping bridge the gap between experience and understanding that exists between caretakers and those they serve. Carrie saw virtual reality as another powerful tool that could cultivate understanding and empathy within those who care for people facing all types of conditions. Embodied Labs was founded to build that tool, and to redefine what it means to care for others.



**embodied
labs**





Play (k)



EMBODIED LABS LEARNING FRAMEWORK

prepare



Get ready for
your VR
experience

embody



Have an
embodied
experience
in VR

reflect



Talk about what
you know, feel,
or understand
better

apply



Use what
you learned
in real life

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NAELA's Aspirational Standards for the Practice of Elder Law

[Download a PDF of NAELA's Aspirational Standards:
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B. Client Identification

The elder and special needs law attorney:

1. Identifies the client and the individuals who will assist the client at the earliest stage of the representation, obtains the client's agreement on these identifications, and communicates this information to the persons involved.
2. Recognizes the unique challenges of identifying the client when a fiduciary is acting on behalf of a protected individual.
3. Meets with the prospective client in private at the earliest practicable time to help the attorney identify the client and assess the prospective client's capacity and wishes as well as the presence of any undue influence.



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G. Client Capacity

The elder and special needs law attorney:

1. Continues to respect the right to self-determination and confidentiality of a client with diminished capacity.
2. Develops and uses appropriate skills and processes for making and documenting preliminary assessments of client capacity to undertake the specific legal matters at hand. Adapts the interview environment, timing of meetings, communications, and decision-making process to maximize the client's ability to understand and participate in light of the client's capacity and circumstances.
3. Takes appropriate measures to protect the client when the attorney reasonably believes that the client (a) has diminished capacity; (b) is at risk of substantial physical, financial, or other harm unless action is taken; and (c) cannot adequately act in his or her own interest.



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G. Client Capacity

5. Uses appropriate measures to protect the client, including (a) considering the wishes and values of the client if known or, if not known, the client's best interests; (b) minimizing intrusion into the client's decision-making autonomy; (c) respecting the client's family and social connections; and (d) considering a range of supportive actions other than court proceedings and adult protective services.
6. Preserves client confidences to the extent possible by only divulging that information necessary or appropriate for protective action.
7. Seeks guardianship or conservatorship only when no other viable alternatives exist.



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Learn About...

- Early indications of cognitive changes associated with dementia
- Challenges associated with visual and auditory distortion
- Strategies for successful communication and independence preservation

Part 1:

- While in the experience, you will embody a character. At times, their sight and hearing may be affected by their condition. This is intentional – it is not a problem with your video or computer.
- Strong emotional reactions are common.



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DISEASE KNOWLEDGE

- The brain has 5 lobes, but they do not work alone.
- They work together to carry out complex cognitive functions, such as planning, communicating, paying attention, remembering things, and knowing where the body is in space.



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Alzheimer's is known as a disease that causes memory problems.

Is this accurate?



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Alzheimer's affects many other cognitive functions in addition to memory loss. It is important to think of Alzheimer's as a whole brain disease, not just a disease that causes memory loss.



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INTERACTIONS

Beatriz experienced some confusion in the store. How could the store employee have helped Beatriz more effectively?



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How did you feel as Beatriz when your family members were all in your kitchen at Easter?



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Can you think of some places where an individual may experience some of the same feelings?



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COMMUNICATION

What are some ways that you and your staff can positively interact with an individual in the early stage Alzheimer's Disease?



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How can you effectively communicate to visitors about how lots of people talking at once is experienced by someone with Alzheimer's disease?



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PA Rules of Professional Conduct

Rule 1.14 – Client with Diminished Capacity

(a) When a client's capacity to make adequately considered decisions in connection with a representation is diminished, whether because of minority, mental impairment or for some other reason, the lawyer shall, as far as reasonably possible, maintain a normal client-lawyer relationship with the client.

(b) When the lawyer reasonably believes that the client has diminished capacity, is at risk of substantial physical, financial or other harm unless action is taken and cannot adequately act in the client's own interest, the lawyer may take reasonably necessary protective action, including consulting with individuals or entities that have the ability to take action to protect the client and, in appropriate cases, seeking the appointment of a guardian ad litem, conservator or guardian.

(c) Information relating to the representation of a client with diminished capacity is protected by Rule 1.6. When taking protective action pursuant to paragraph (b), the lawyer is impliedly authorized under Rule 1.6(a) to reveal information about the client, but only to the extent reasonably necessary to protect the client's interests.



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PA Rules of Professional Conduct

Rule 1.4 - Communication

(a) A lawyer shall:

(1) promptly inform the client of any decision or circumstance with respect to which the client's informed consent, as defined in Rule 1.0(e), is required by these Rules;

(2) reasonably consult with the client about the means by which the client's objectives are to be accomplished;

(3) keep the client reasonably informed about the status of the matter;

(4) promptly comply with reasonable requests for information; and

(5) consult with the client about any relevant limitation on the lawyer's conduct when the lawyer knows that the client expects assistance not permitted by the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law.

(b) A lawyer shall explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation.



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PA Rules of Professional Conduct

Rule 1.6 – Confidentiality

(a) A lawyer shall not reveal information relating to representation of a client unless the client gives informed consent, except for disclosures that are impliedly authorized in order to carry out the representation, and except as stated in paragraphs (b) and (c).

(b) A lawyer shall reveal such information if necessary to comply with the duties stated in Rule 3.3.

(c) A lawyer may reveal such information to the extent that the lawyer reasonably believes necessary: (1) to prevent reasonably certain death or substantial bodily harm;

(2) to prevent the client from committing a criminal act that the lawyer believes is likely to result in substantial injury to the financial interests or property of another;

(3) to prevent, mitigate or rectify the consequences of a client's criminal or fraudulent act in the commission of which the lawyer's services are being or had been used;



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PA Rules of Professional Conduct

Rule 1.6 – Confidentiality

- (4) to establish a claim or defense on behalf of the lawyer in a controversy between the lawyer and the client, to establish a defense to a criminal charge or civil claim or disciplinary proceeding against the lawyer based upon conduct in which the client was involved, or to respond to allegations in any proceeding concerning the lawyer's representation of the client;
- (5) to secure legal advice about the lawyer's compliance with these Rules;
- (6) to effectuate the sale of a law practice consistent with Rule 1.17;
- (7) to detect and resolve conflicts of interest from the lawyer's change of employment or from changes in the composition or ownership of a firm, but only if the revealed information would not compromise the attorney-client privilege or otherwise prejudice the client; or



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PA Rules of Professional Conduct

Rule 1.6 – Confidentiality

(8) to comply with other law or court order.

(d) A lawyer shall make reasonable efforts to prevent the inadvertent or unauthorized disclosure of, or unauthorized access to, information relating to the representation of a client.

(e) The duty not to reveal information relating to representation of a client continues after the client-lawyer relationship has terminated.



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Progressing Impact: Mid-stage Alzheimer's

In this module, you'll embody Beatriz and experience mid-stage dementia, including sundowning and difficulty with self-care. You'll also observe a family careplan meeting, and see how deterioration in the brain affects cognitive functioning.



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Learn About...

- How the changing brain affects one's ability to successfully communicate and process information
- How to reduce sun-downing triggers through proactive practices like keeping the room well-lit, engaging in activities, reducing stimulation, and more.
- Successful communication methods and the detrimental effects of negative interactions



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PART 2:

REMEMBER

- While in the experience, you will embody a character. At times, their sight and hearing may be affected by their condition. This is intentional – it is not a problem with your video or computer.
- Strong emotional reactions are common.



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DISEASE KNOWLEDGE

- Just as the build up of plaque damages arteries, or as diabetes affects the circulatory system – Alzheimer's affects the brain's neuro-transmitters
- The build up of amyloid plaques interrupts communications in the brain and causes neurons to die.



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People with Alzheimer's lose function because their disease makes them unable, **NOT UNWILLING**, to behave and remember things normally.



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INTERACTIONS

Should the nurse making the home visit with the family have asked Beatriz: “Do you remember me?”



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It is a positive practice not to ask someone with memory impairment if they remember you, because it may add to the persons stress level if they are unable to do so. Try greeting the person with a friendly hello and your name, instead.



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How does a negative tone of voice and negative interactions around an individual with Alzheimer's impact them?



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COMMUNICATION

- Ask simple questions
- Engage in tactile activities
- Play music/sing/dance
- Use a gentle tone of voice
- Be patient when answering the same questions over and over
- Help read a simple book

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Advancing Deficits: Late-Stage Alzheimer's

In this module, you'll embody Beatriz and experience late-stage Alzheimer's, including visual deficits and disturbances, receive care from a home health agency, and experience the effects of familiar music.



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Learn About...

- Meaningful ways to connect with those living with late-stage dementia (music, nature, etc.)
- Improving compliance rates by using intentional, positive care methods which meet the elder's current needs and honor personal preferences
- Reducing elder distress by understanding visual and sensory changes that occur in late-stage dementia



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PART 3:

REMEMBER

- While in the experience, you will embody a character. At times, their sight and hearing may be affected by their condition. This is intentional – it is not a problem with your video or computer.
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DISEASE KNOWLEDGE

- As the disease progresses in the brain, more of the lobes and cognitive functions are affected.
- The parts of the brain that allow a person to recognize faces is deeply affected by the third stage, causing faces to be distorted and the person to be disoriented.



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- Even though a person can no longer recognize people, they still may sense that they are familiar and trustworthy.
- Speaking, making eye contact, and sitting next to or in front of the person, without touching them, unless they are comfortable with light touch.



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INTERACTIONS

Is Beatriz still able to feel love and connection to her family even in the late stages of the disease?



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It can be difficult for an individual in late stage Alzheimer's to accomplish a task in a timely manner, and it can be hard for those around to be patient.

SLOW down and be patient – “let go” of the time pressures

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Think about the five senses. Which senses are most affected in a person with late stage Alzheimer's disease?



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NAELA's Aspirational Standards for the Practice of Elder Law



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H. Communication and Advocacy

The elder and special needs law attorney:

1. Works to minimize barriers to effective communication with clients.
2. Maintains direct communication with the client, whether in person, by telephone, or through correspondence, even when the client chooses to involve others (including an agent under a durable power of attorney).
3. In order to obtain informed consent, advises clients of their options, explaining the possible consequences of each option.
4. Advocates for the courses of action chosen by the client.



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H. Communication and Advocacy

5. When developing a plan to secure and pay for long-term supports and services should:
- a) Strive to determine the client's wishes and values in order to achieve the client's objectives concerning living options, health care, loved ones, and property;
 - b) Endeavor to preserve and promote the client's dignity, self-determination, and quality of life;
 - c) Counsel the client about the full range of long-term services options, risks, consequences, and relevant costs;
 - d) Counsel the client in light of the client's needs, personal values, wishes, best interests, and the alternatives available; and
 - e) Counsel the client on the estate planning and tax implications of the client's choices for long-term services on his or her property.



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