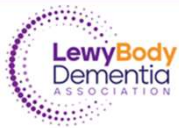


Mind and Mood in Lewy Body Dementia

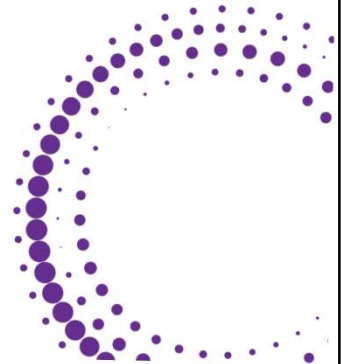
Kate Wyman, PsyD, ABPP



RESEARCH
CENTERS OF
EXCELLENCE



Struthers
Parkinson's Center



1



"Understanding the symptoms is often the first step toward responding with confidence and compassion."

2



How does Lewy impact cognition?

3

Areas of Cognition

Attention and Processing Speed

Memory

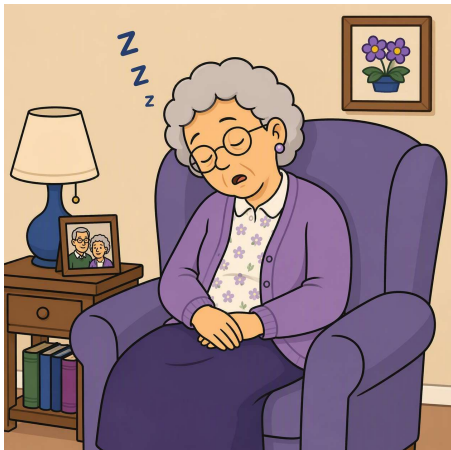
Language

Executive Functioning (planning, multitasking, problem-solving, decision-making)

Visuospatial Skills (depth perception, perceiving objects)

4

Fluctuating Cognition



Alertness and attention can vary significantly

Periods of confusion and sudden drowsiness are common

Some days (or hours) are clearer than others

Difficulty performing a task performed yesterday or even earlier in the day

Changes may seem unpredictable

5

✓ **Plan activities during the best time of day**

- Understimulation can contribute to cognitive fluctuations
- Pace activities to avoid exhaustion or overstimulation

✓ **Be flexible! Cognitive fluctuations are unpredictable.**

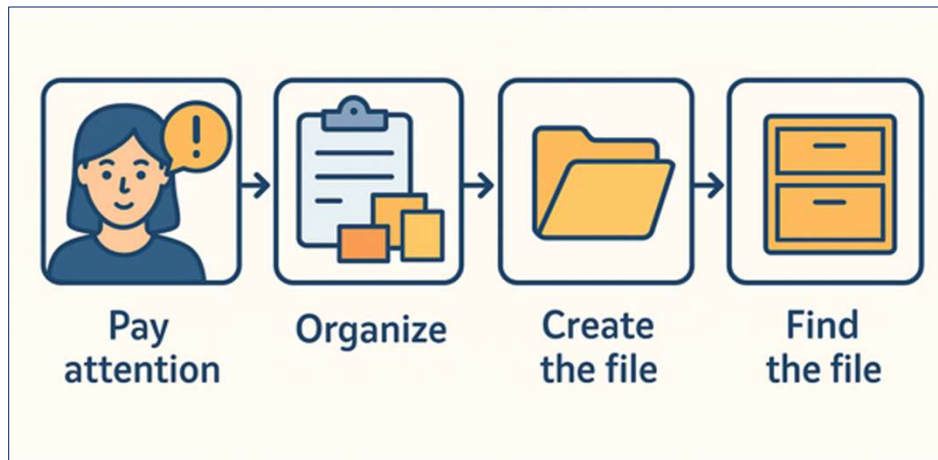
- You may need to take a break and return to the task or conversation later

✓ **Use Simple, Clear Language**

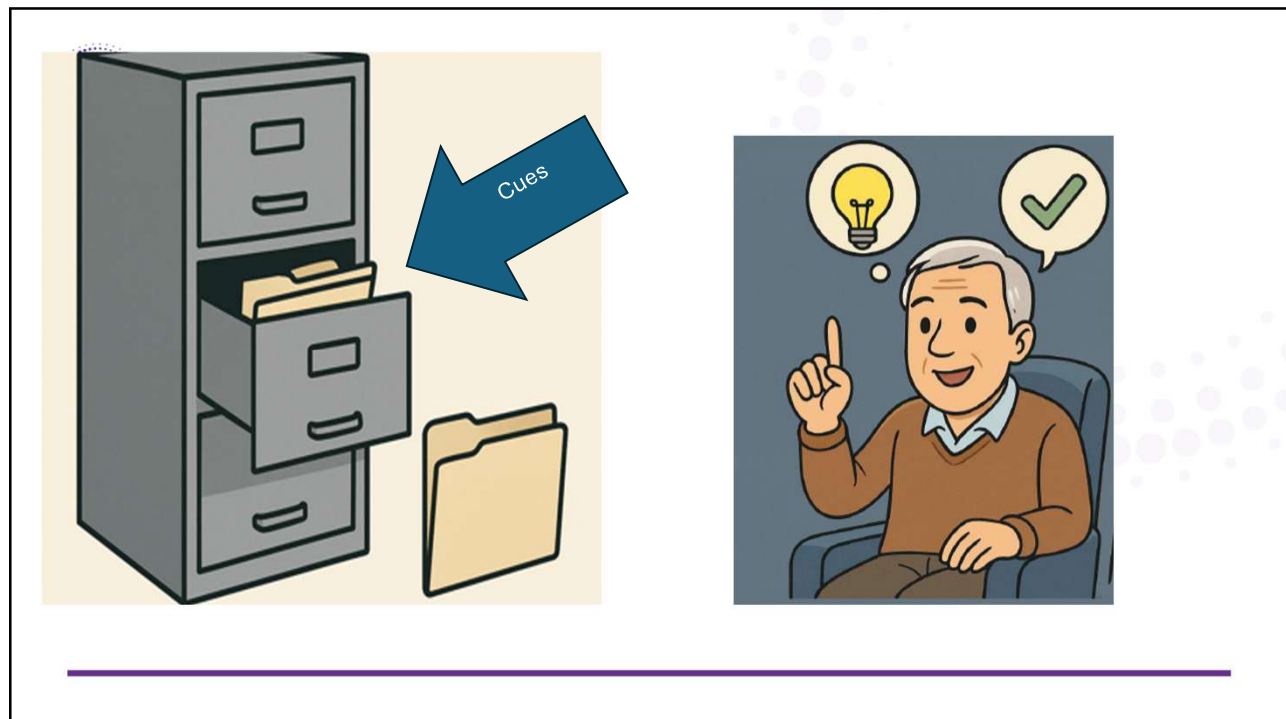
- Speak slowly and clearly in short sentences
- Avoid complex instructions or abstract concepts
- Allow extra time to formulate thoughts or process information
- Rephrase gently if needed, without correcting harshly

6

Memory is complicated!



7



8

✓ **Optimize the environment**

- Hold important conversations in distraction-free environments

✓ **You may need to take a break and return to the conversation later**

- Drowsiness or confusion complicates our ability to remember information

✓ **Give gentle cues**

- It can be frustrating when there are memory lapses, but it is not intentional, it is Lewy.

✓ **Use notes, calendars, and visual reminders**

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Communication Challenges

Trouble finding the right word

Losing train of thought in conversation

Conversations move too quickly

Episodic difficulty communicating thoughts, resulting in ideas that may not make sense to others.



10

✓ Invite participation in the conversation

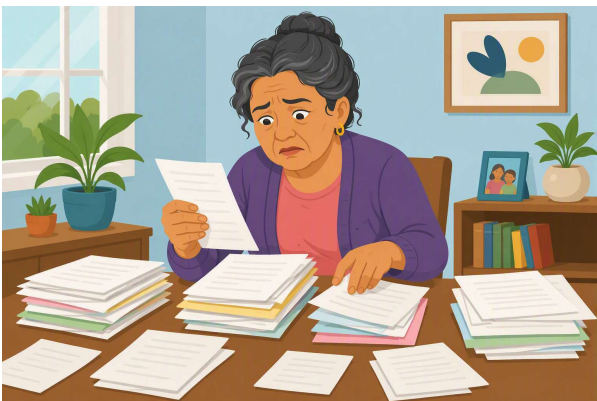
- Sometimes it can be hard for someone with Lewy to “jump in”
- “We were just talking about ---- what do you think about that?”

✓ Be Patient

- Pause and allow yourself to gather your thoughts without pressure.
 - Avoid rushing or finishing sentences for the person.
 - Stay calm—frustration can increase anxiety and worsen the problem
-

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Executive Functioning



Multitasking

Complex attention

Problem-solving

Organization

Decision-making

Planning

12

✓ **Simplify**

- Use short sentences and address one topic at a time
- One task at a time without interruption, if possible
- Avoid multi-step instructions
- Offer a limited number of choices instead of open-ended questions

✓ **Routine & Structure**

- Keep consistent daily schedules to reduce cognitive load

✓ **Monitor for safety concerns**

✓ **Focus on strengths!**

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LEWY BODY DEMENTIA and VISION CHANGES

Many people with Lewy Body Dementia (LBD) experience changes in how they see and process the world. These are not always due to eye problems, but rather how the brain interprets visual information.



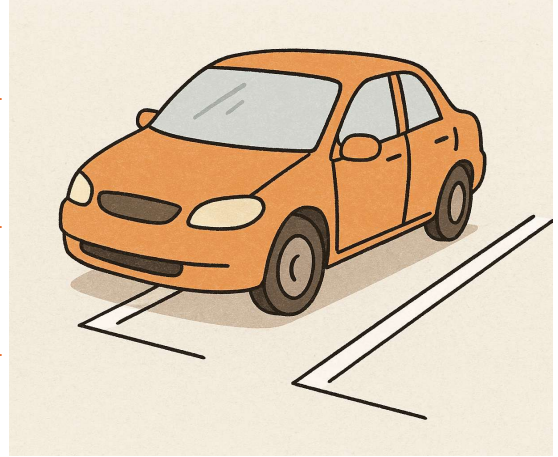
14

Problems judging distance or depth

Becoming lost in familiar places

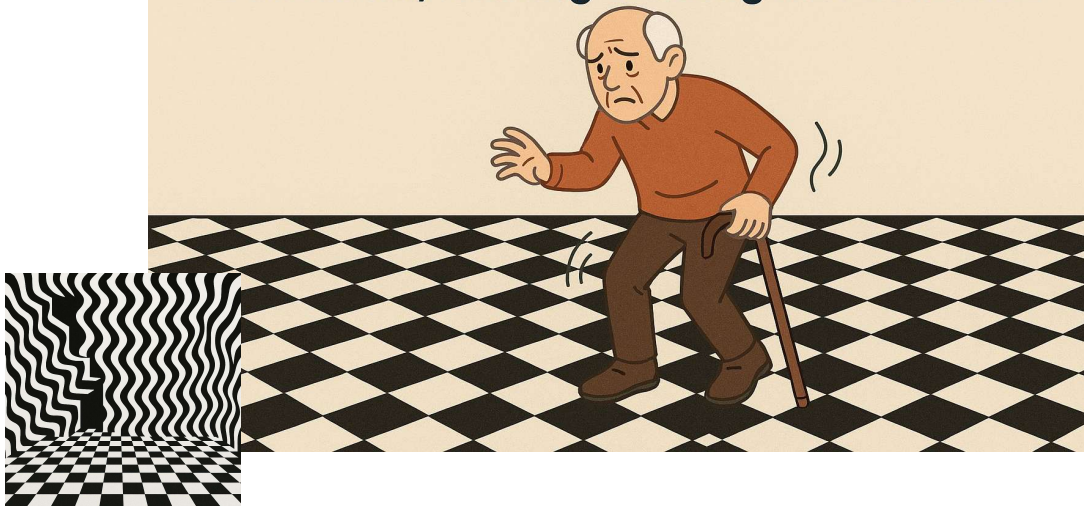
Difficulty finding objects

Double vision



15

Patterned floors can confuse the brain's visual system in Lewy Body Dementia, making walking more difficult.



16

Misperceptions

Briefly mistaking a pattern or object for something else

Often a person or an animal



17

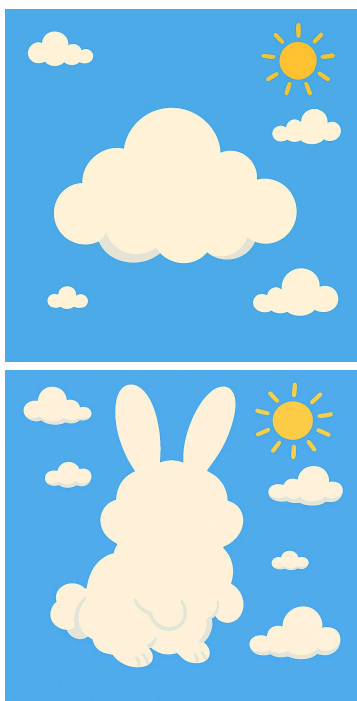
Vision is complex



Pathway One involves the perception of the stimuli without preconceived ideas

Pathway TWO involves assigning meaning to objects based on your prior experiences and knowledge.

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Vision is complex!

In LBD, we perceive less accurately

and

we assign more meaning to objects
based on their visual characteristics.

19



Misperceptions

Often occur more frequently and become more vivid over time



Hallucinations

Can be distressing but are usually non-threatening

Sometimes people have insight or awareness

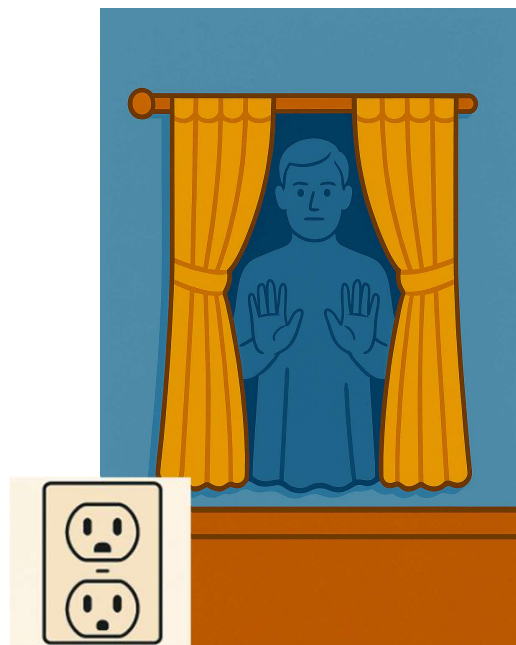
20

Hallucinations

More likely to occur at night and in dimly lit rooms

Reflective surfaces, such as windows can create a fuzzy reflection may contribute to an increased risk of hallucinations

Auditory hallucinations, such as hearing music or voices, can also occur.



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✓ **Calm reassurance**

- If a hallucination occurs, avoid arguing. Offer comfort and gently redirect.

✓ **Contrasting colors**

- Use contrasting plates, bedding, or rugs to help with depth perception.
- Highlight steps and thresholds with non-slip, high contrast tape.

✓ **Routine & rest**

- Fatigue can worsen visual symptoms.

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✓ **Regular eye exams**

Rule out cataracts, glaucoma, or vision loss.

✓ **Good lighting**

Keep rooms well lit

Reduce shadows

Adjust contrast on electronic devices to reduce glare

✓ **Reduce clutter**

Clear pathways to prevent misinterpretations or falls

Avoid patterned floors or rugs

Avoid glass furniture

Try to keep items in the same place

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How does Lewy impact mood?

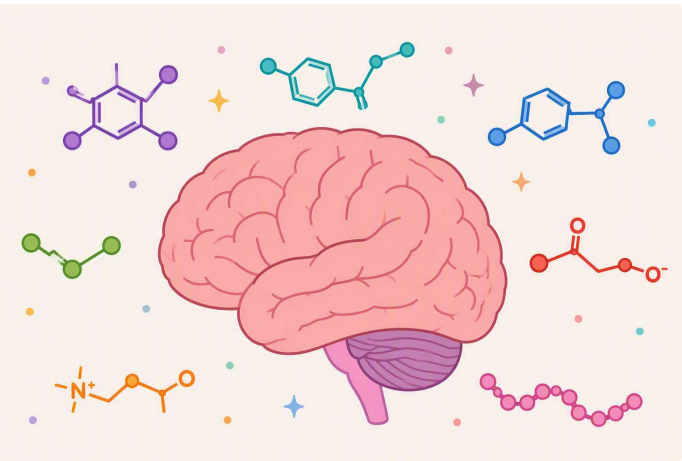
24



Psychological and behavioral changes occur due to a complex interaction between neuroanatomy, Lewy pathology in the brain, and neurochemistry

Changes in emotions and behaviors are part of the disease

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Anxiety

Depression

Irritability

Apathy

26



Why should we treat mood symptoms?

Decreased quality of life for person living with LBD

Reduced participation in rehab therapies, exercise, and social activities

Greater functional decline

Increased caregiver stress

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Report changes in symptoms to your medical team

- There may be medications or other forms of treatment that could be helpful

Fatigue, motor symptoms, agitation, and cognitive fluctuations may interfere with activities that are good for mood and brain health

- Pace activities and prepare to try again later

Previously enjoyed tasks may be too difficult or frustrating

- Break down complex tasks into small, easily achievable tasks
- If motivation is a challenge, encourage to try a new hobby together

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What about some of the more challenging symptoms that can occur?

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Delusions

Illogical, irrational, dysfunctional views or persistent thoughts that are not based in reality.

- Paranoia is common

It is often unhelpful to argue or present “facts”

- Just like hallucinations, this is very real and rational to the person

If a person experiencing delusional thoughts feels unsafe or unheard, they may exhibit agitation or aggression

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30



Agitation

State of restless emotions or behavior

- Pacing or rummaging
 - Feeling unsettled / unable to sit still
 - Repeating statements or phrases
 - Hand wringing
 - Trying to leave
 - Expressing frustration or arguing
 - Refusing assistance with care, such as bathing
 - Refusing travel
-

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✓ Keep calm and be reassuring

- Slow down
- Give space

✓ Arguing is not helpful

- Avoid trying to reason or provide evidence the person with the hallucination or delusion is incorrect
- Redirecting attention to another task can be helpful

✓ It can be more calming to acknowledge the person is seeing something than to say you do not see what they are seeing.

- "I will ask them to leave so they do not bother you anymore"
- "I won't let anything bad happen to you"
- "I am sorry you are upset"
- "I will stay until you feel better"

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✓ **It is important to assess whether the symptoms developed rapidly (hours to days)**

- Medications, infections, and other medical factors can contribute

✓ **Take note of when recurrent problematic behaviors are likely to occur**

- Is the environment overstimulating? Or are they bored?
- Is there an indication the person is uncomfortable or in pain?
- Is the person out of their normal routine?
- When did they last eat or drink something?

✓ **Communicate new symptoms with your medical team**

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Key Takeaways

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- ✓ Try to remember, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral changes are SYMPTOMS of Lewy
 - ✓ Cognitive clarity can vary hour-to-hour and day-to-day and flexibility is key
 - ✓ LBD affects how the brain processes visual information and can contribute to hallucinations
 - ✓ **Communicate new symptoms with your medical team**
-

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A large, decorative circular graphic composed of many small purple dots of varying sizes, arranged in a ring-like pattern.

Thank You

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