

Finding Community and Connection Through Cognitive Stimulation Therapy: *Sharon Puckett's Story*



At Potosi Sports and Physical Therapy Clinic, a group of seniors gather weekly for Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) a program that's changing lives through mental engagement and social connection.

What is CST?

CST is an evidence-based treatment for seniors experiencing mild to moderate cognitive changes. CST program participants do weekly one to one and group sessions with clinic staff. One to one sessions work on personal goals for memory, balance, and independence. Group sessions bring all participants together for orientation activities, discussions on current events, and social interaction in a supportive setting.

Sharon's Story

"I noticed that I was forgetting things," says Sharon Puckett, an 85-year-old participant who joined the program after her husband's passing five years ago. Discovering a brochure during physical therapy, Sharon promptly consulted her primary care doctor to see if she met the program requirements and enrolled.

If you or a loved one are interested in CST or being evaluated for dementia/memory loss, take a cue from Sharon Puckett's journey—reach out to your primary care provider today and take the first step towards a brighter tomorrow.

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What surprised her most? "How much I enjoy it," she explains. "I can tell if I miss a week... I'm just happier about the world in general if I'm here."

Each group session, led by Occupational Therapy Assistant Bridget Bourisaw, includes checking the date, weather, and current events, followed by conversations that foster connection. "There's a lot of conversation about what's going on in our lives, which is good," Sharon notes.

Beyond Memory Exercises

The program's benefits extend beyond cognitive stimulation. Sharon recently decided against driving to the airport to pick up her daughter—a trip she would have attempted before CST. "Before CST, I would have gone...and maybe gotten lost," she admits.

Bridget, the program leader, praised this self-awareness: "I'm proud of you for identifying it...that's a huge step."

Building Community

Perhaps CST's greatest impact is the community it creates. Sharon formed meaningful friendships with fellow participants like Doris Knapp and become an advocate for the program.

The therapy has also helped Sharon navigate major life changes, including downsizing to an age-appropriate home. "She found a place where she can grow there, age there, be safe...and still be independent," Bridget observes.

When asked about her goals with the program, Sharon answers simply: "Just staying with it. I don't have any intentions of stopping."

In a world where aging often brings isolation, CST demonstrates how structured cognitive activities combined with social connection can dramatically improve quality of life, helping participants find purpose and confidence in their later years.

"I'm a firm believer that this is a good program," Sharon says, speaking to the power of community-based interventions that address both mind and heart.