

Dear

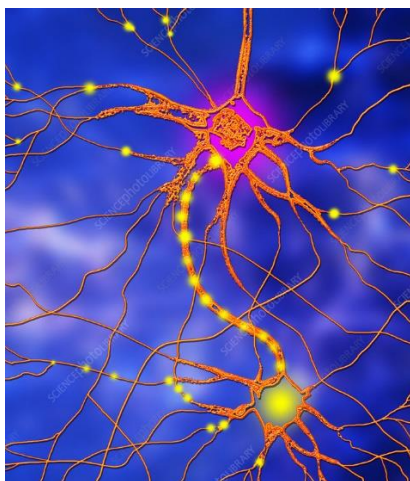
You might be wondering why XXX isn't the same as he/she used to be. I am writing to help you understand why this is.

XXX has an illness called dementia. This isn't like a cold or a fever, where you are ill and then get better. It is an illness where parts of your body stop working and don't start again. In dementia the nerve connections in your brain break down. Let me explain what this means.

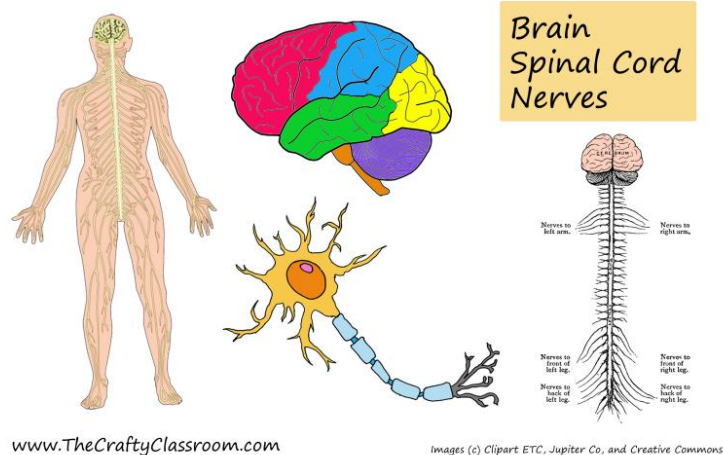
Let's think about a road track for cars. Even if you don't have one, I think you know the sort of thing I mean. You put all the track pieces together carefully and then the cars can race around with no problem. If the track pieces come apart or are broken, then the cars crash and don't run anymore.

In our body there are millions of nerves cells, which don't look like pieces of track but are useful in the same way. A track carries the cars to where they need to go; nerve cells have long tails which connect with each other making a HUGE network throughout the whole body ending up in your brain. Instead of cars, this network carries information.

Below is a photo of a real nerve cell. There are lots more fantastic pictures on the web.



The Nervous System



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The nerve network (nervous system) carries all the information about what you see with your eyes, hear with your ears, taste with your tongue, smell with your nose, feel with your fingers (and every other part of your body of course) to the brain. This is where all the data from the body is turned into thoughts and programming happens to enable us to learn and remember things. The brain is your body's personal computer

When a person has dementia, it's a bit like the computer getting a virus and crashing. The connections between nerve cells in the brain break down and can't be

repaired. That makes it very difficult to organise your thoughts and to remember things All sorts of things!

Maybe a person can't remember the names of people, or places. Maybe they can't remember how to put their clothes on in the morning. Maybe they forget how to use a knife and fork. Maybe they can't make sense of what they are watching on TV or reading in a book. Maybe they can't really understand what people are saying to them anymore - which is really embarrassing because maybe they used to be very clever. That can make a person cross and sometimes they might shout a lot or even throw things about. Every person who has dementia is different and the way they forget things is different.



I think XXX is being the way he/she is now because some of the things listed above are happening to him/her.

Dementia is a horrible illness and it makes us very sad when XXX can't do the things he/she used to do very easily and well; like xxxxxxxx for example. We just have to keep doing the things we can do with XXX while we can.

That's a rather long answer to what you might have been wondering. If you have any questions, I am sure Mummy and Daddy will be able to tell you what you need to know.