

# Right Brain: Oriented to Self

Kristin Geczi, BA

*Neurology*® 2023;100:349-350. doi:10.1212/WNL.0000000000201602

**Correspondence**

Ms. Geczi  
kristitg@umich.edu

## Abstract

In medical school, students learn to view the world through a biomedical lens. While necessary clinically, this lens can be impersonal. For example, the mental status examination (MSE) evaluates cognitive function through a brief assessment of alertness and orientation to person, place, time, and situation. While clinically useful, the MSE often neglects to capture a person's individuality. Visiting my grandmother who has Alzheimer disease highlighted this tension. I juxtaposed the impersonality of our MSE orientation scale with my grandmother's lived experiences. My grandmother is identified using a pseudonym. Informed consent was obtained from her health care power of attorney and family.

Birds twitter and chirp as they flit into the shade,  
the covered patio a respite from the morning's heat.  
I sit with Joanna and show her a painting:  
an apple, red peppers, a garlic clove, and a grapefruit  
rest on a white napkin.  
Produce so vibrant the napkin is stained  
with their vivid reflections.

The wrinkles around her eyes deepen as she squints at the picture.  
She always liked to see my artwork.  
Bright colors illuminate the lines of confusion on her face.  
Where did you get all this food?  
We're rationing for the war to stop Hitler.

I have evaluated dementia:  
limited treatment options, behavioral interventions.  
Cognitive changes alter  
orientation to self,  
place, time, situation.  
Joanna and I sit on the memory care patio.  
The birdfeeder dances in the humid summer air.  
I've shared my artwork with Grandma Jo  
from crayons' waxy scrawl  
to crisp acrylic colors.  
Today a t-shirt replaces my white coat.

The war is over, grandma.  
The produce is from a grocery store.  
I redirect with another painting.  
This is a bridge in a park—  
She smiles: it's New York City, I miss going there.

In the middle of Central Park,  
a cement bridge in a grassy park  
spans a wide, still pond.

From the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Go to [Neurology.org/N](https://www.neurology.org/N) for full disclosures. Funding information and disclosures deemed relevant by the authors, if any, are provided at the end of the article.

Copyright © 2022 American Academy of Neurology

Copyright © 2022 American Academy of Neurology. Unauthorized reproduction of this article is prohibited.

Today, the colors of the bridge,  
reflected on the water,  
spark a glimmer of my grandmother.  
This time she knows the memory is in the past,  
as she tells me about New York in the Forties.

With the beating of sparrow wings,  
the moment of clarity ends  
as past and present are blended again.  
When the sun sinks, my visit will fade.  
I clutch what happened  
outside, away from the clinical setting.  
What we cannot quantify  
with A&O x1: oriented to self.

---

### Acknowledgment

The author would like to acknowledge Emma Posega Rappleye for her contributions to editing this poem and John David Ike, MD, for his guidance and review of this piece.

### Study Funding

No targeted funding reported.

### Disclosure

The author reports no disclosures relevant to the manuscript. Go to [Neurology.org/N](https://www.neurology.org/N) for full disclosures.

### Publication History

Received by *Neurology* August 1, 2022. Accepted in final form October 10, 2022. Submitted and externally peer reviewed. The handling editor was Ariel Lyons-Warren, MD, PhD.

---

### Appendix Author

Name	Location	Contribution
Kristin Geczi, BA	University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	Drafting/revision of the manuscript for content, including medical writing for content; major role in the acquisition of data

---

## Visit the *Neurology*<sup>®</sup> Resident & Fellow Website

Click on Residents & Fellows tab at [Neurology.org](https://www.neurology.org).

Now offering:

- *Neurology* Resident & Fellow Editorial team information
- “Search by subcategory” option
- E-Pearl of the Week
- Direct links to Career Planning and AAN Resident & Fellow Pages
- Recently published Resident & Fellow articles
- Commentaries by Editors and Resident & Fellow team members

 Find *Neurology* Residents & Fellows Section on Facebook: [facebook.com/AANResidentsAndFellows](https://www.facebook.com/AANResidentsAndFellows)

 Follow *Neurology* on Twitter: @GreenJournal #NeurologyRF

 Find *Neurology* Residents & Fellows Section on Instagram: @aanbrain #NeurologyRF

# Neurology<sup>®</sup>

## Right Brain: Oriented to Self

Kristin Geczi

*Neurology* 2023;100;349-350 Published Online before print November 28, 2022

DOI 10.1212/WNL.0000000000201602

### This information is current as of November 28, 2022

<b>Updated Information &amp; Services</b>	including high resolution figures, can be found at: <a href="http://n.neurology.org/content/100/7/349.full">http://n.neurology.org/content/100/7/349.full</a>
<b>Subspecialty Collections</b>	This article, along with others on similar topics, appears in the following collection(s): <b>All Cognitive Disorders/Dementia</b> <a href="http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/all_cognitive_disorders_dementia">http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/all_cognitive_disorders_dementia</a> <b>All Education</b> <a href="http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/all_education">http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/all_education</a> <b>Alzheimer's disease</b> <a href="http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/alzheimers_disease">http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/alzheimers_disease</a> <b>Assessment of cognitive disorders/dementia</b> <a href="http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/assessment_of_cognitive_disorders_dementia">http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/assessment_of_cognitive_disorders_dementia</a>
<b>Permissions &amp; Licensing</b>	Information about reproducing this article in parts (figures, tables) or in its entirety can be found online at: <a href="http://www.neurology.org/about/about_the_journal#permissions">http://www.neurology.org/about/about_the_journal#permissions</a>
<b>Reprints</b>	Information about ordering reprints can be found online: <a href="http://n.neurology.org/subscribers/advertise">http://n.neurology.org/subscribers/advertise</a>

*Neurology*® is the official journal of the American Academy of Neurology. Published continuously since 1951, it is now a weekly with 48 issues per year. Copyright © 2022 American Academy of Neurology. All rights reserved. Print ISSN: 0028-3878. Online ISSN: 1526-632X.

