



June 2011

Welcome

Inside this issue:	
<i>Choice and dementia: keeping it simple</i>	2
<i>Behaviours That Challenge</i>	2
<i>Validation Responses</i>	3
<i>Crabbit Old Woman</i>	4

Just to keep you all up to date with where I'm at and what I plan to be doing next: I've nearly finished rolling out the first three education sessions and following this I will be focusing on identifying a dementia champion for each care facility that has dementia beds. I will then hold an education day for the dementia champions and our first job together will be to invite the families of those residents in the

dementia beds to an education afternoon/ evening where we will run a dementia awareness session for them. This session will explore the changes in dementia care delivery that I have been promoting and what changes they can expect to see in the dementia units. Following this I will work alongside the champions to support them in championing appropriate dementia care and enabling them to become their

homes dementia expert. I will be approaching the facility managers in the coming few weeks to help me identify the champions, but if you have a particular interest in being one please let me know via the contact details in this newsletter. Warm regards, *Ruth*

"Dementia" - what is it?



There are a number of different definitions of the word dementia: "A state of acquired intellectual impairment that leads to reduction

in activities and participation", "A serious loss of cognitive ability in a previously unimpaired person, beyond what might be expected from normal aging", etc, but ultimately I don't think we should get too focused on the definition- what we should be looking at is

how the dementia process is effecting the person, and what we can do to help them be less distressed by the strange and often frightening world that they find themselves in. **Knowing the diagnosis can be helpful: Knowing the person is paramount.**

Choice and dementia: Keeping it simple.

When you are offering someone with dementia a choice you need to keep it simple and uncomplicated.

For example: "Tom, would you like this beautifully baked chicken and corn pie. It comes with peas and boiled potatoes. Or perhaps you would like a garden salad with fresh lettuce, tomato and beetroot, you can have ham or chicken with it?"

A beautiful description of the food but far too much information for someone with dementia

to follow and then make an actual choice about it. So it needs to be "Tom would you like chicken pie or a ham salad?"

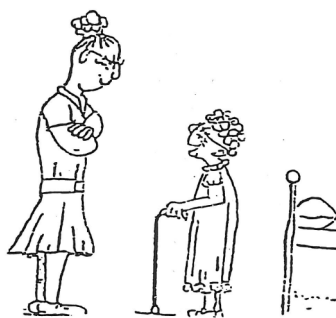
We should be encouraging as much choice as is possible into the world of someone with dementia but those choices must be made in a context that can be understood and are realistic.

Making choices (good or not so good) are part of being a person. It helps us to express who we are and how we like to do things.

A person with dementia has those same desires to make choices and decisions about how they are going to spend their day/night.

These choices should include when the person is going to get up in the morning, when they are going to get dressed, when (and if) they are going to have a shower today, and of course when they are going to go back to bed again.

So build in plenty of choice for the person with dementia but keep it simple and realistic.



"Honey, I've been through two world wars, the Great Depression, taught 13,297 children, administered four elementary schools and outlived every one of the pastors I worked with. I'm 89 years old and you're telling me it's bedtime?"

Behaviours That Challenge

When a person with dementia displays a behavior that challenges it can be easy to forget that it is simply that person's way of expressing something that they can no longer express through normal words.

It can feel as if the person is behaving in a way that is done to annoy us, frighten us or just to get on our nerves.

It has to be remembered though that the usual routes for saying "I'm in

pain", "I'm too hot/too cold", "I'm lonely", "I'm tired", "I'm angry", "I'm frustrated", "I want to get out of here", etc are no longer there for someone with dementia and therefore they express these things through their behaviour e.g. pacing, shouting, rattling doors, removing their clothes, etc.

A behavior that challenges is simply an expression of what the person is feeling or

trying to tell us. So we need to be looking for what the person is expressing i.e. the cause of the behaviour and then resolve to work with that.

For example: if someone with dementia is resistive to being got up and dressed in the morning are they simply telling us that they don't want to get up yet, or perhaps they are telling us that their joints ache from lying in bed?



Validation Responses

In the last next newsletter we had a look at therapeutic lying and even though this can feel very awkward to do at times it can often be the best response to someone with dementia who is living in a different reality and therefore has a different perspective on things. However a different way of responding to someone with dementia, and one that feels more ethical is a “validation” response.

A validation response responds to the emotion behind what the person is saying or doing as opposed to looking at whether what they are saying or doing is correct or makes sense.

For example Joan (95 years old) may say “I need to go and see my mother, she’ll be worried about me”. Now Joan’s mother is, in all likelihood, going to be long since dead and a poor response to her would be “Your mother is dead.” A validating response could be something like “It sounds like you miss your mother” or “Your mother sounds very caring”.

Or if perhaps Joan starts to hoard or hide things you could explore what she is fearful of losing and then give her a box, bag or cushion cover to hide things in.

~~~~~  
Key to a validation response is accepting that the person with dementia’s emotions have more validity than the logic that leads to them.  
~~~~~

You can also use distraction/redirection if it is appropriate, but not if it is unrelated to what the person is expressing. For example you wouldn’t say “It sounds like you miss your mother. Have you seen that it’s raining outside?”

You should try to match the intensity and type of emotions with your response as this helps to show the person that we have understood them correctly and that we empathise with them. For example you should use responses that show support “I’d be upset to if that happened to me.”

If the person realises part way through a conversation that what they are saying is a bit odd or unlikely, then allow them a graceful exit, don’t be tempted to say “I knew your mother couldn’t still be alive. She’d be well over a 100 by now”. Allow them to take the conversation in a different direction or to simply mumble to themselves “Of course my mother can’t be alive, she’d be well over 100 by now”.

~~~~~  
Our aim for someone with dementia is not to cure them as this currently isn’t possible, but it is to reduce the effects of when their dementia causes them distress and by properly listening and responding to the emotional content of what someone says can really help them as it tells them that we have “heard” their emotions.  
~~~~~

“The difference between ordinary and extraordinary—is that little extra”

Crabbit old woman

This is a poem that has been around for many years and occasionally gets resurrected via the internet and proclaimed to have “just been found following the death of an elderly man or woman”.

Crabbit Old Woman

What do you see nurses? What do you see?
What are you thinking when you're looking at me?



A crabbit old woman not very wise,
Uncertain of habit with faraway eyes?
Who dribbles her food and makes no reply.
When you say in a loud voice 'I do wish you'd try!
Who seems not to notice the things that you do.
And forever is losing a sock or shoe?
Who, resisting or not lets you do as you will,
With bathing and feeding The long day to fill?
Is that what you're thinking? Is that what you see?
Then open your eyes, nurse you're not looking at me..

I'll tell you who I am As I sit here so still,
As I do at your bidding, as I eat at your will.
I'm a small child of ten with a father and mother,
Brothers and sisters who love one another.

A young girl of sixteen with wings on her feet.

Dreaming that soon now a lover she'll meet.

A bride soon at twenty my heart gives a leap.

Remembering, the vows that I promised to keep.

At Twenty-Five, now I have young of my own.

Who need me to guide and a secure happy home.

A woman of thirty my young now grown fast,

Bound to each other with ties that should last.

At forty, my young sons have grown and are gone,

But my man's beside me to see I don't mourn.

At fifty, once more, babies play 'round my knee,

Again, we know children my loved one and me.

Dark days are upon me my husband is now dead.

I look at the future and shudder with dread.

For my young are all rearing young of their own.

And I think of the years and the love that I've known.

I'm now an old woman and nature is cruel.

Tis jest to make old age look like a fool.

The body, it crumbles grace and vigor, depart.

There is now a stone where I once had a heart.

But inside this old carcass a young woman still dwells,

And now and again my battered heart swells.

I remember the joys I remember the pain.

And I'm loving and living life over again.

I think of the years, all too few, gone too fast.

And accept the stark fact that nothing can last.

So open your eyes, nurse open and see.

Not a crabbit old woman ...look closer . . . see ME!

