
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Triggered by dementia - an experiential training module to teach person-centred care for people with dementia

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Context: Health and social care professionals working in both residential and home care are often confronted with complex behaviour and complicated demands for care, especially in relation to persons with dementia. To address these needs the principles of person-centred care as described by Tom Kitwood, and the principles of Appreciative Inquiry, are helpful theoretical frameworks. Putting these framework into practice is a challenge.

The research group Active Ageing of the University College Leuven-Limburg has developed an experiential training module "triggered by dementia" for both professionals and students involved in dementia care.

"Triggered by dementia" is a an experiential 1-day training module in which participants are immersed in the world of people with dementia. The day is divided into 3 themes in which participants alternate between 4 roles: experience, observe, reflect and learn.

Theme 1: Immersed in the wonderful world of dementia

Purpose: to promote the empathic ability and observation skills (to see needs and requirements) and learn to reflect on actions.

Health care providers are experiencing how it feels to receive and give care in a 10staged experiential carrousel. How does it feel to misunderstand a caregiver, how does it feel to eat if you don't want to, how can you manage difficult tasks, how does it feel to receive too much or too little incentives. But also: How does it feel to be understood, to be empowered to use the remaining skills, to receive a smile and a warm contact. Participants go through the carrousel as pairs. After each stage there is a moment for personal reflection on the basis of an entry form: How did you experience this exercise? Which emotions did you feel? At the end of the 10 stages a group reflection focuses on personal experiences, recognizing automatisms, but also recognizing personal "strengths". During this group reflection the trainer refers to the functioning of the brain in people with dementia and the principles of the environmental care (Verbraeck & Van der Plaats, 2012).

Theme 2: Dealing with a person with dementia

Purpose: to provide tips and tricks to address needs and requirements of persons with dementia.

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In the 2nd part, the focus is on "how to deal with people with dementia". With the experience and the theoretical background of theme 1 participants are asked to simulate a person with dementia in a residential care facility during the coffee break. The participants receive a chart with information of their character, their role, their specific task and an attribute that supplements their role e.g. glasses, a skirt. One participant takes on the role of caregiver and some of the participants observe. After the simulated exercise there is a moment for debriefing and reflection: how was it for the caregiver? What did the observers see? How did you feel as a resident? Were your needs addressed? How did you experience the setting? The participants are stimulated to link their current exercise with the theoretical frameworks and with their own setting.

In the next stage the experience is linked to concrete tips and tricks on delivering person-centred care throughout simple exercises. Tips and tricks focus on observation, specific approaches, using life stories etc.

Theme 3: Together as a team

Purpose: to promote communication and cooperation in the team

In the last part of the day the focus is on teamwork and communication. How can we, as a team, reach a mutual goal? How can I as a team member make changes in the workplace? What are the pitfalls? By means of simple practice-based exercises communication, group dynamics and the 10 golden rules of giving and receiving feedback are taught. The day concludes with a reflection.

Keywords: person-centred care; dementia; experiential learning
