

Worksheet 6:

Techniques to facilitate positive Interactions

There are some techniques that can be used to facilitate positive interactions with a person with dementia. Many have been explored already and can be presented as activities that focus on the unique communication abilities of the person with dementia or meeting specific needs.

Some further techniques may include:

- **Reminiscence** is the act of recollecting past experiences or events and looking back over them to possibly help a person make sense of their life. Reminiscence can help build a sense of identity or belonging, and can help raise self-esteem by recalling times that were particularly valued. Reminiscence can range from being a uniquely personal experience to a large shared group activity. Personal items from the person's history or general items from times past can be used to promote discussion, and to facilitate the recall of memories.
- **Reality Orientation** is an approach designed to help raise a person's awareness of their current place in the environment that they inhabit (their name, their role, the time, date, location and current surroundings). It is thought to be particularly useful if the person with dementia is able to connect with our collective reality and re-orientate themselves accordingly. This can be achieved through the repeated use of the person's name and the inclusion of current information in an informal way, for example *"It's quite cold for August"* or *"It's nice here at Forester Court"*.
- **Sensory Work** enables those who may not have this level of ability to focus more on the raising of self-awareness. Sensory media may be used to stimulate engagement with the environment as the person may respond to touch, gentle rocking movement and communication based on body language.
- **Massage** can be a powerful tool to help a person take charge of their own health and well-being. It can enable people to feel at ease, and to communicate in a calm and relaxed manner. It can provide opportunities for appropriate touch and interaction with another person. Hand massage can be particularly non-threatening as our hands are the only 'safe' part of our anatomy that we will offer to a stranger! Hand massage could be introduced as part of a person's regular hand and nail care.
- **Creative Therapies** often use non-verbal expression like art, dance, drama or music as a means to help communicate a person's thoughts and feelings.
- **Reflection or mirroring** is something that we often do subconsciously when we're relaxed and feeling comfortable in the presence of another person. However, in a dementia care setting, we could consciously mirror the movements, actions or spoken words of the person with dementia as a means of making contact with them. This can be a powerful activity for people who might otherwise be communication disabled.