

Worksheet 4:

The Human Becoming Theory

(Parse, R.R. (1996) Quality of life for persons living with Alzheimer's disease: the human becoming perspective. *Nursing Science Quarterly*).

Rosemarie Parse first published the 'Man-living-health' theory in 1981. This looked at human becoming (a tool used to facilitate understanding of human behaviour) specifically in relation to people's living health. The name was changed to the 'Human Becoming Theory' in 1992.

In 1996 Parse researched the meaning of 'quality of life' for people living with Alzheimer's disease. She used the Human Becoming Theory for this descriptive-exploratory study in which twenty-five people with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease were asked to describe their quality of life. Findings showed that the quality of life for the participants included:

- *"A contentment with the remembered"*.
- *"Now affiliations that arise amidst the tedium of the commonplace"*. Meaning that through normal day-to-day life, the participants found that they have begun to make new connections with others.
- *"As an easy-uneasy flow of transfiguring surfaces with liberating possibilities and confining constraints"*. Meaning that living with Alzheimer's disease, participants found that the ever-changing experiences they were undergoing sometimes gave them a sense of freedom (for example from having to take responsibility, make decisions or follow social etiquette), but at other times gave them a sense of debilitating limitation.
- *"While desiring cherished intimacies yields with inevitable distancing in the vicissitudes of life as contemplating the ambiguity of the possible emerges with yearning for successes in the moment"*. Meaning that the participants accepted that during the ups and downs of life, the desire for loving intimacy begins to wane. However, they are aware that opportunities and achievements can arise from the uncertainty of the unknown (referring to the lived experience for the participants of having Alzheimer's disease).

Parse proposed that the quality of life of people living with Alzheimer's disease can be an experience of extreme contradiction. She described it in this way:

Calm vs. Turbulence

Freedom vs. Restriction

Certainty vs. Uncertainty

Togetherness vs. Aloneness

This theory states that people have a combination of biological, psychological, sociological and spiritual factors that need to work together to enable the person with dementia to experience a higher level of well-being and better quality of life. Parse upheld some of Martha Rogers' theories as described in *Science of Unitary Human*

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*Beings*⁸ that everyone should be viewed as an integral part of the universe. She proposed that human beings and the environment have energy fields, and that nursing practices should be directed towards ‘patterning and maintaining’ these energy fields. All people have a continuous, mutual interaction with the environment.⁸

It is essential that the whole environment (including access to appropriate outdoor spaces, familiar and recognisable built environments, professional approaches, effective communication opportunities, access to appropriate activities of daily living, etc.) is appropriate for and supportive of the person with dementia.