

Worksheet 9:

What are the benefits of working in a person-centred way?

Your trainer will ask you to read one of the following case studies and answer the question.

Jim is sixty-two. He has been diagnosed with Dementia with Lewy Bodies (DLB) and vascular dementia. He lives with his wife Sandra who has given up her job to be Jim's full-time carer.

Sandra has been in touch with her local social services department to inform them that she needs help as she can no longer 'cope' with Jim. A social worker visits Jim and Sandra to undertake an assessment of their needs. Sandra tells the social worker that Jim is becoming increasingly disabled and needs help with all of his personal care needs. She says that he can no longer make himself a hot drink or any food, and that he refuses to leave the house. Sandra tells the social worker that although she loves Jim dearly, he is 'driving her round the bend' because he follows her around the house all the time.

Jim tells the social worker that he is fine, just a bit bored. He says that Sandra is 'a wonderful woman' but that she 'fusses' over him all the time.

The social worker begins to make some suggestions as to what services might be offered to help. He suggests that 'Jim going somewhere for the day... perhaps a day centre' might be helpful. Jim and Sandra reject this idea as neither of them is a very sociable person and the thought of Jim going somewhere with people he does not know is very worrying for them both. The social worker suggests some help with Jim's personal care. Jim quickly asks 'why?' as he does not feel that he any needs help in this area.

The social worker asks Jim 'What would you REALLY like to do. If you could... what would be the thing that you would most enjoy?'. Jim says tearfully 'get out in my shed again'. Sandra tells the social worker that all through their married life Jim has spent most evenings in the garden, usually in his shed as he 'loved it out there'. As Sandra had a job she loved, and was frequently away from home, this suited them both. As a result of the Lewy Body dementia, Jim has fallen several times outside, and this has made him nervous about going out. Sandra indicates that she would like to help him to go outside, but that she would have to stay with him all the time which wouldn't really help the situation.

The social worker decides to refer Jim to the Reablement Team. A Reablement Support Worker – Graham – is assigned to Jim, and together with Sandra he creates a support plan which is orientated to the goal that Jim will be able to get back out into the garden and his beloved shed. Graham arranges for hand rails to be installed at the back door and shed door, and agrees a risk management plan with Sandra and Jim in the event that he may fall. Graham arranges six sessions with Jim, each two hours in length. Jim's first session with Graham involves tidying the shed and making a list of things that he might like to do in the shed – 'mainly sleeping or sitting with a nice glass of beer' says Jim. While Jim has been in the shed, Sandra has been able to order some new shoes, make a cake for their tea and arrange to meet an old work colleague for a coffee the next time Jim is with Graham. →

What were the benefits of working in this person-centred way for Jim, Sandra and the care professionals?

Grace is eighty-three years old and has recently moved into Foresters Court, a nursing home for people with dementia. She has a daughter, Monica, who visits her mother twice a week. Monica has been her mother's carer for over ten years.

Grace needs to take regular tablets for a variety of serious health conditions. Care staff at Foresters Court dread giving Grace her tablets. Grace shouts at them "go away... go away you witches... not that... not like that..." Grace tries to push her tablets away and if they do get as far as her mouth, she spits them out. The care team has tried everything – different staff members, different times of day, even asking if the medication can be provided in a liquid form (unfortunately it only comes as tablets). Though the care team has not wanted to worry Grace's daughter, they have decided to talk to her about it as they feel that more 'assertive' methods may be needed to ensure that Grace takes her tablets.

Monica looks a little confused when Grace's keyworker, Natasha, describes the difficulty that they are having. Monica says that this has never been a problem before and, as an ex-nurse, Grace has always known how important medication is and been keen to ensure that she takes her tablets regularly.

Monica asks what happens, and Natasha explains that they usually offer Grace her tablets in a little pot with a glass of water or juice to take them with. Monica suggests that this might be the problem. She says that Grace has never taken tablets with a drink. This goes back to her childhood and has been a lifelong experience. Grace has always taken tablets in a spoonful of jam or chocolate spread. Monica says that when she was caring for her mother, she would sometimes give Grace her tablets with chocolate mousse as this is Grace's favourite food.

Natasha shares this information with her colleagues. Some are thrilled to know how Grace takes her medication. However, some staff are worried that this would be seen as covert administration of medication which is illegal.

The manager at Foresters Court agrees to discuss this with Grace's GP, but suggests to the staff that this would be for additional support for them as this is not covert administration of medication; it is Grace's usual way of taking tablets. She explains to her team that as a person-centred home they need to recognise and support the individuality of each resident and endeavor to support them to engage in activities, including taking medication, in their own preferred way.

Grace's GP agrees with the home manager. He adds that he has known Grace and Monica for many years, and has known about how Grace takes her medication because she has asked him many times if it was 'ok' to take her tablets in this way.

The next time that Grace's tablets are due, Natasha takes them to her with a small pot of chocolate mousse. Grace's eyes light up when she sees the mousse. Natasha invites Grace to take the mousse and the spoon, whereupon Grace says 'thank you darling'. After Grace has had two mouthfuls, Natasha tells her that she has her tablets and shows them to her. Grace holds the spoon out to her. Natasha scoops a little mousse onto the spoon, gently drops her tablets onto it and hands the spoon back to Grace. Grace smiles broadly at her as she eats the mousse.

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