

A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives it a superficial appearance of being right. Thomas Paine

There is significant growth in the belief that 'training is the answer' in developing person-centred care services. Large-scale investment exists in the UK in purchasing dementia care awareness training.

The metaphor of a garden is useful here. Gardens are not created by just scattering a few seeds on unprepared earth. Plants do not usually thrive just being randomly put in the ground. Gardens do not generally flourish where the gardener has no clear vision. Using the wrong tools never helps. So why is this the approach to growing person-centred dementia care? Where did the belief originate that dementia care awareness training would enable staff to flourish?

Tokenistic training

Do you recognise the features below in dementia care training?

Time up for dementia awareness training?

David Sheard calls for a shift in dementia care training away from traditional courses which have little lasting impact, towards a coaching and mentoring approach

- certificates on the wall with no evidence of changed practice
- staff on training with no managers present
- 'tick box' training with no coaching, mentoring or follow-up
- individual skills development but no emphasis on a team approach.

Typically, dementia care awareness training is an event held to raise staff awareness and develop individual skills. It is characterised by involving DVD/video learning, training exercises and handouts which

are disconnected from any measured baseline of a care setting's current practice or any planned appraisal of the care culture into which the training is to be incorporated. The event is not linked to measurable action planning nor followed up through coaching or mentoring. The end recipients of the training – people experiencing a dementia – are not consulted on the training material before delivery, nor the effects of the training afterwards. This type of training does not focus on the actual lived experience of people whom the training is about and appears to be held without any method to ascertain whether it results in improvement in terms of quality of life. It seems to be enough that the event was held and triggered participants' interest; certificates of attendance are issued, not certificates of implementation.

We now know that while awareness-raising training has its part to play in growing individuals' basic skills in dementia care, its impact is very limited. Evidence from a number of studies of current quality in dementia care homes shows this. Through heightened awareness and provision of basic skills, individuals may be able to change moments in people's lives. But it is organisations, leaders and skilled teams that change whole care cultures. The current emphasis in dementia care training is all back to front. Why invest in growing individual skills in staff before there has been any preparation of the ground? Training that is not centred on an organisation's vision, strategy, leadership and teamwork will always flounder.

The challenge

The challenge is STOP giving staff basic awareness training that will not impact enough on improving the lived experience of people with a dementia. START focusing a learning and development strategy where it will create most impact. Developing a person-centred approach requires:

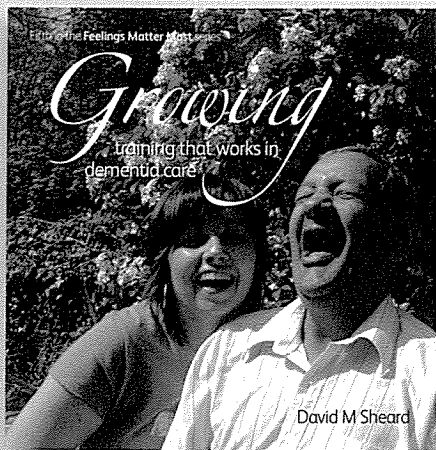
- focusing staff more on BEING person-centred rather than DOING it
- facing up to the truth of people's lived experience
- breaking down the barriers between 'us and them'
- nurturing emotions at work and emotional connection.

Similarly, a person-centred approach to training requires:

- more strategic thinking, less random purchasing of training
- making leadership training in person-centred dementia care mandatory
- embedding qualitative observational training as a foundation for learning
- team-based training prioritised over individual skills development
- action-based learning with daily evidence.

Daren Felgate, former training and development manager, Alzheimer's Society, has commented, "The challenge here is not that it is unachievable but that it takes us out of our comfort zone. We ask care staff to face this all the time. Why not managers and trainers facing up to some uncomfortable truths?"

He that would perfect his work must first sharpen his tools. Confucius



Growing: training that works in dementia care

The last book in the Feelings Matter Most series, Growing urges dementia care trainers to develop a vision of being more effective and highlights the need to grow training from simple awareness raising to reality based training.

David Sheard draws on previous arguments for change in dementia care and sets clear guidelines for organisations to develop a person-centered learning and development training strategy. Part of this strategy is a new 10 point workshop programme designed for delivery by accomplished trainers in the dementia care environment.

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The right balance

To strike a balance between training and coaching:

1. Decide what can only be achieved through a conventional training approach.
2. Consider who needs to be trained as a trainer or coach in person-centred dementia care.
3. Set a budget with real total costs for training versus coaching.
4. Shift some training costs, allied costs and staffing costs for attendance on training to a coaching budget.
5. Develop a coaching team in the organisation.

So much of the fruit of dementia care training comes not from the actual delivery but the preparation beforehand. *Growing: training that works in dementia care*, published by Alzheimer's Society (Sheard 2008), provides help with this preparation by identifying:

- ten elements of a learning strategy
- ten training principles
- an action based 32-point learning checklist.

The book also introduces the Being A Star™ flexible learning programme, which takes staff beyond awareness-raising and individual skill development to an approach which emphasises that:

- improving self-awareness is the route to being person-centred
 - guaranteeing people's quality of life should be the central focus of learning
 - transferring skills into team-based action is the only real evidence of learning that matters.
- Its focus is on:
- developing emotional intelligence, not competencies
 - exploring self-awareness, not learning first about 'others'
 - working from the lived observed experiences of people in care settings, not artificially created 'case studies'
 - changing whole cultures, not just trying to change individual staff
 - action based learning in living areas, not classroom-based teaching
 - daily examination of what is working and what is not in lounges and dining rooms

- looking at often-ignored areas of specialist dementia care skills.

Growing in confidence

It takes confidence to shift away from the easy option of awareness-raising training. Dementia Care Matters had to make this shift itself four years ago. Sometimes in life we avoid what works best as it can feel too risky or uncomfortable for ourselves. It can feel easier to keep churning out 'safe' topic-based training.

The future of dementia care training has to lie in its ability to show evidence that people's lived experience in care settings has improved. It requires a very different sort of learning and development, which avoids 'tick box' training. Dementia care training needs to become more sophisticated in its range of learning methods while simplifying its messages to staff about what being person-centred is.

Six years on from the production of the Alzheimer's Society training programme *Yesterday Today Tomorrow*, we still have very little evidence that the messages it highlighted have been adopted on a large enough scale. We have to hope that we now know better than we did what it really takes to grow training that works.

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David Sheard is director of Dementia Care Matters, a training consultant with Alzheimer's Society and a visiting senior fellow in the Division of Health and Social Care, University of Surrey. David Sheard's book Growing is the fifth book in his Feelings Matter Most series.

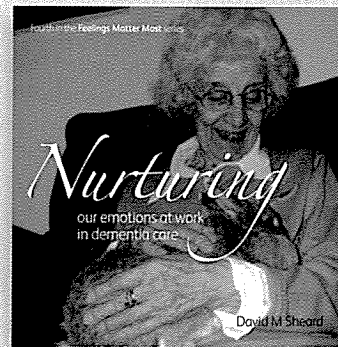
Arts in dementia care

Cambridgeshire Libraries has won regional funding to support the NHS Dignity in Care Campaign with an innovative project, Countering Stigma in Dementia Through Creativity. John Killick will deliver the project as writer in residence for nine months from April 2009. The project aims to:

- give persons with dementia in Cambridgeshire the opportunity to express themselves verbally about their condition and life generally;
- help them to shape these insights in poetic form;
- disseminate these artistic creations through readings, posters and a book;
- influence the perceptions of the general public through giving them access to these artistic works, so they may see persons with the condition as valuable members of society with a voice and a unique contribution to make;
- offer training to librarians, care staff and medical practitioners so they may continue to encourage and value creativity after the project has ended;
- link with existing groups and new partners;
- use creativity to promote Dignity in Care across the region by sharing the results of this project and with high profile public performance and media involvement.

More information at <http://networks.csip.org.uk/dignityincare/News/newsItem/?cid=5036>

- Ladder to the Moon's latest interactive show (London area, May-June 2009) is *Here's Looking at You*, set in Rick's Bar, Casablanca and based on the classic film. Two professional actor facilitators, skilled in engaging with people with dementia, hold the threads of the story together; everyone who wants to has a role 'on set' and can join in as they wish. More information at www.laddertothemoon.co.uk or contact Cara on 020 7228 9700.



Nurturing: our emotions at work in dementia care

One of the Feelings Matter Most series, Nurturing turns attention on the reflected area of staff support in dementia care by promoting the need to hear the voices of people working in dementia care.

Nurturing encourages organisations to be genuinely interested in person centred care and the effective recruitment, appraisal, support and retention of staff. The impact of emotional labour in dementia care must then receive more priority.

The book looks at:

- findings of a UK survey of staff and their responses to naming emotions at work
- David Sheard's new concept of attached professionalism
- how care organisations can develop an Emotions at Work framework

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