

# Dementia Awareness (Unit 1): Session 4 (2 hours)

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## **P = Personality**

The aim of this session is for you to consider how the personality of someone with dementia becomes an important consideration when care planning. All too often we see problematic behaviour being attributed as a product of the dementia condition; thus seeing only the dementia.

## **What if we instead first saw the person, then the dementia?**

It is this concept that Kitwood (1993) became particularly notable for. Indeed for Kitwood, understanding the personality of someone with dementia would give important information in understanding behaviour and of course for supporting care interventions.

To get a greater understanding for this, it is perhaps important to examine our own personality and how this affects our day to day activities.

## **Pause for thought**

Firstly, think about your own personality, what response would you give to the following questions:

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| <b>1. Are you generally quiet?</b>      | <b>YES / NO</b> |
| <b>2. Are you outgoing?</b>             | <b>YES / NO</b> |
| <b>3. Are you a 'morning person'?</b>   | <b>YES / NO</b> |
| <b>4. Do you normally stay up late?</b> | <b>YES / NO</b> |



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|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| <b>5. Do you enjoy company of others?</b> | <b>YES / NO</b> |
| <b>6. Are you a reserved person?</b>      | <b>YES / NO</b> |
| <b>7. Are you argumentative?</b>          | <b>YES / NO</b> |
| <b>8. Are you generally cheerful?</b>     | <b>YES / NO</b> |
| <b>9. Do you prefer your own company?</b> | <b>YES / NO</b> |
| <b>10. Do you like to keep busy?</b>      | <b>YES / NO</b> |
| <b>11. Are you shy?</b>                   | <b>YES / NO</b> |

There are many more questions you could ask yourself, all referring to what may be described as personality type.

These questions are basic, and are used only for illustrative purposes. It is not a comprehensive assessment for personality type. However, it is likely you would have circled a range of both yes and no answers. List your yes answers and consider what this may suggest about your own personality

Reflect on the answers you have given and what they may suggest about your own personality type and how this affects how you both interact with others and also how you perceive events.

Consider the different types of personality or the dominating 'traits' in a person's general disposition. This may range from introverted, extroverted, negative, cheerful, pessimistic, etc.



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This will have a big impact on how people behave and perceive events, but also how others view or see the person. This has particular impact in dementia. Students interested in knowing more about their own personality are invited to read Eysenck and Wilson (1975/6) 'Know your own personality'. This is a classical text in this field and provides self assessment of six key personality traits allowing assessment of extraversion, emotional stability, sense of humour and sexual, social and political attitudes. Please note however this was written over 30 years ago, but is still of interest.

Kitwood (1993) suggested we carry a kitbag around with us, containing our resources, life achievements, experiences and adventures, amongst other things , around with us; all of which we tap into/access when the need arises to support us through life. Imagine that you carry a kitbag around with you. You have carried this kitbag with you since you were born. As you progress through life, you put 'tools' for coping (and not coping) into this bag. It becomes your resource. During key events in our life as well as day to day interactions, we use and rely upon these tools.

### Pause for thought

What things would you write next to the kit bag below that may be part of your tool kit for your life?



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## Comment

Some examples of things that may be part of your tool kit (both positive and negative) may include



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Different people will have different answers.

## e-tivity 4.1 (1 hour)

### Purpose

To consider what 'tools' we use in our own lives which may be missing in a person with dementia.

### Task

- 1) Consider what you might like to share about what s in your kit bag ...**(Note to facilitator - suggest discussion board)**



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- 2) Compare and contrast the 'kitbags' people have, both the richness and diversity, but also the similarities that exist between them.

## Respond

Comment on at least two other team member's 'kitbags'. **(75 words)**

It is clear that our personality impacts on our day to day lives, and how we 'go about things'. We need to remember this with people with dementia as well. Their behaviour may be a sign of their personality, not their dementia. However, as a person's dementia progresses they may not have access to their 'tools for life' in their kit bag. These tools may no longer be available due to their change of social/environmental circumstances, or because of difficulties in processing information.

## e-tivity 4.2 (1 hour)

### Purpose

To consider how interprofessional teams find out about a person with dementia and uses this information in practice

### Task

- 1) Reflect on how you get to know a person with dementia
- 2) Add one way of finding out information from a person with dementia to...**(Note to facilitator - suggest a wiki)** and include how easy it is, are there any pitfalls? **(100 words)**

## Respond

Respond to at least one member of your team from a different professional group **(50 words)**.

## Reference

Kitwood T (1993) *Discover the person, not the disease. Journal of Dementia Care* 1 (1) pp.16-17.



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