Dementia Awareness (Unit 1): Session 7 (2 hours)

SP = Social Psychology

This refers to the environment, both socially and psychologically, that the person with dementia finds themselves in. It includes the interactions with others, communication, negative and positive behaviours and words. Essentially, as argued by Brooker (2007) it is primarily concerned with relationships between people.

It is important to consider this relationship between care staff and people with dementia, and ensuring that this remains supportive and nurturing. The consequences of this relationship to the social psychology of the person is important, and has a deep and profound impact on the individual experience of dementia (Kitwood, 1993).

Importantly, care staff, through their day to day interactions be supportive or damaging to the social psychology of the person with dementia, probably without even knowing. Thus an important part of understanding the person with dementia is to also understand the impact of our own actions in shaping their experience.

Brooker (2007) discusses in detail of the need to provide for a supportive social environment, and refers to the work of Kitwood (1997) who describes ways of interaction that may dehumanise or 'put down' the person with dementia. This has been referred to as malignant social psychology. This itself can have a negative outcome on the person and may lead to further deterioration.

Pause for Thought

1) Think about an incident in your life when you felt 'put down' by someone's attitude and behaviour to you.

2) What did they do or say?

3) What effects did this have on you?

4) Do you think this was done deliberately?

It is possible however, to also convey a 'positive social psychology' through relationships.   Kitwood (1997) referred to these as 'enhancers' and 'positive person work'.   These include ways of behaving towards someone that maintains and develops personhood.

Another pause for thought

1) Now think about an incident in your life when you felt 'good / safe/ respected' following someone's attitude and behaviour to you.

- What did they do or say?

- What effects did this have on you ?

- Do you think this was done deliberately?

Comment

Kitwood and colleagues at the University of Bradford identified 17 detractors (sometimes referred to as malignant social psychology) and 17 alternative enhancers (positive person work) and are used in Dementia Care Mapping (DCM).

e-tivity 7.1 (2 hours)

Purpose

To consider the use and effect of detractors when caring for people with dementia

Task

1) Use the following link to listen and watch the film which is an introduction to Dementia Care Mapping by Paul Edwards at the University of Bradford (20.48mins)

---

http://vimeo.com/8040980

2) Now consider the table below, where some examples of personal detractors are noted, taken and adapted from Brooker and Surr (2005) and Brooker (2007).

Malignant Social Psychology – Personal detractors	Positive Person Work – Personal enhancers
Intimidation – frightening a person through for example the use of threats	Warmth
Outpacing – providing care or giving information at too fast a pace for the person to keep up	Relaxed Pace
Infantalisation – treating the person like a child through words or actions	Respect

3) Reflect on whether you have seen these in your own practice.   It is important to note, that often these are not undertaken deliberately

4) Imagine what you think the alternative ways of interacting, as noted in italics in the second column could be defined as.
   - Have you seen examples of this in practice?
   - What effect did it have on the person's behaviour?

5) Write your ideas in the*…(Note to facilitator - suggest wiki reflecting table above) (100 words)*

Respond

Comment on at least two other team members' experiences of using detractors in their own practice.

_____

Conclusion

Whether working in health or social care, it is important to remember that you can have a direct effect on the day to day life of a person with dementia by using enhancers and avoiding detractors.   Dawn Brooker (2007) and Dawn Brooker and Clare Surr (2005) have written on this in great detail and remains recommended reading for anyone involved in dementia care.

References

Brooker, D (2007) Person centred dementia care practice; making services better. London; Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Brooker, D., and Surr, C. (2005) Dementia Care Mapping: Principles and Practice. Bradford; University of Bradford

Kitwood, T. (1997) Dementia Reconsidered; the person comes first. Buckingham; Open University Press