

“Speak Up * Know Your Rights And How To Use Them

Visiting with the seniors in long-term care is always an educational and a learning process. Most days I leave a building feel positive and hopeful that I have made some difference in their day; but there are some days too, that I leave tearful... I can not change how their body feels, I can not turn back the hands of time.

When I visited with a group of residents recently and began to go through some of the questions for the topic of Speaking Up and Knowing Your Rights, I yet again left with mixed emotions.

What do you want people to know about you and how you like to receive care? I had to break the question down a little bit... “If I am a new staff person, just starting my first day – what do you think is important for me to know about you?”

“I’m not too bad off” “I am a Christian” when I asked why that was important, he responded “that’s what we work by, the good Lord.”

“I would like them to talk to me. I’ve traveled lots of places before coming here to live. I’ve been lots of places.” “I want them to be patient and helpful to me. That I have MS and it’s different then someone with arthritis.”

“Treat me like any other person, a human being” “That I like music too and it’s important for me to have that”

“I was a farmer and worked hard all my life”

“That before my stroke, I worked for over 20 years at a Power Rental Equipment Company. One day was good, then the next day, I am here and in a wheelchair.”

I reminded the residents in my attendance, that each month I come in during Resident Council Meetings and talk to them about their rights. I present a right and we have a discussion surrounding that right. “So, if I was a new resident, just coming in to the building, what would you tell them about the rights they have? How important their rights are?”

“I think it’s important to have rights. A lot of people don’t understand they have rights living here.”

“It’s important that I have rights. We have the right to say yes or no.”

Most of the other residents in presence, agreed with the others. Agreed they had rights. *“I don’t always remember them, or remember what you say about them, but I know I can say yes or no.”*

Each of the residents I visited with, I asked for their ages; and they ranged from mid 60’s to early 90’s. When I asked them their ages – the common first response was “but most days I feel much younger.” “I am having a birthday next week and I will be 80, I wish I was going to be 40.”

“Author is not being nice to me today” When I asked who Arthur was, she responded *“arthritis. We all call him Art or Arthur around here. When he is not being nice, then I feel like I am about 100.”*

A gentleman I sat closely with, due to his impaired hearing.. “May I ask how old you are?” and he stated with a slight grin *“they just told me at the doctors that I was 22, I think I am older than that, I feel a little older than that, not by much, but I don’t think I am 22.”*

I am privileged to work with our senior population every day and to promote and remind them, that they have rights. If you break down the list of Resident Rights, it can be long and may seem overwhelming to some – so what I think I took away the most from my conversation was “I can Yes and I can say No, I have the right to do that.”

Submitted by
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