

Communicating Residents' Rights Through Storytelling

Recommended Participants: Residents, family members of residents with severe dementia, and long-term care ombudsman.

Activity Type: Small group using discussion and storytelling.

Explanation: This activity demonstrates the right to free choice {483.10(d) (3) F280}, specifically the right to participate in planning care and treatment or changes in care and treatment. The desired outcome for this activity is to encourage residents to identify their feelings, desires, and goals related to their current situation and for these personal preferences to become part of the care plan.

Before beginning the activity, the group leader establishes a sense of safety among the group members. Offering refreshments and recognizing each person with a greeting and a handshake are examples of creating an environment conducive to sharing as well as an environment that respects the individual resident. Reminding participants that the information they share will be kept confidential by the group leader is also important. Each person who attends is asked to respect each personal story as private. The goal of the activity and the expected outcome is described to the group.

Once a friendly atmosphere is established, the group leader explains that the questions on pages three and four of the handouts emphasize the value of life stories and lead to an awareness of each individual's current story and its meaning. Next the facilitator shares Ruby's story. This recounting illustrates the activity's format and prepares the residents for participation. Following the story, the participants are asked to answer the questions. After the final question, the group leader guides a discussion about how residents can increase their involvement in the care planning process.

Adaptations: To adapt this group activity for individuals, videotape the group program (with the participants' permission) and show and discuss the video with residents who are unable to attend the group. Reading all the information out loud facilitates participation. Enlarging the handouts or using a flip chart assists visually impaired as well as residents with hearing deficits. The participation of residents who have early, or middle stage dementia is improved by using simple explanations and repetition. Family members of residents with severe dementia can benefit from being reminded of their role in assuring resident rights are honored.

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Example: Ruby's Story

What is the story of your life in the nursing home?

"I am seventy-six years old and my name is Ruby. I am paralyzed from the waist down and I depend on the staff for most of my care. During my working years, I cleaned houses. I know a lot of the staff who work here because I used to clean for their parents. I've had three husbands who all died young. Every morning I enjoy attending the activities. I've always enjoyed being with people. I sometimes miss the morning program because the staff do not assist me in time. While waiting on these late mornings, my breakfast sits in front of me for over an hour. When I complain to the staff, they sometimes snap at me and say I'm not the only one who needs help."

What are your feelings about this story?

"Proud of my past accomplishments, happy to have activities I enjoy and happy to know some of the staff and their families and sad, hurt & disappointed when the staff do not help me get to activities on time."

How would you describe this story in terms of the senses, i. e., sounds, smells, sights and touch?

Sounds: "Laughter in the activities; staff voices - some friendly, some angry."

Smells: "Stale breakfast. Popcorn served at the morning activity."

Sights: "Staff passing my room in a hurry, avoiding me. Others participating in the morning exercise class while I wait in my room. Staff smiling when they wake me up in the morning."

Touch: "Shaking the hands of others as I enter the activity room."

What are you learning from your story?

"I'm learning patience, but I also sometimes feel forgotten."

Who else could benefit from hearing this story?

"People who make the rules for nursing homes. The staff who work here."

Who would you want to understand your experience of the nursing home?

"The people who work here. And people who are going to live here."

What words would you want the staff to use on your care plan to describe your story?

"Happy most of the time. Sad when I can't get to the morning activity and sometimes I even feel worthless. I also appreciate what they (the staff) do for me. They work hard. I hope they say I'm kind and patient but I also enjoy being independent."

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Who are the storytellers in your life - both past and present?

What does a storyteller look like?

What words describe the stories you enjoy the most?

What was the most significant event in your life?

What feelings describe this event?

How would you describe this event in terms of sounds, smells, sights, and touch?

Who could benefit from hearing your story?

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What is the story of your life in the nursing home?

What are your feelings about this story?

How would you describe this story in terms of the senses, i. e., sounds, smells, sights and touch?

What are you learning from the story?

Who else could benefit from hearing this story?

Who would you want to understand your experience of the nursing home?

What words would you want the staff to use on your care plan to describe your story?