



## Supporting individuals

- Communication
- Environment
- Personal history
- Keeping busy

## VERA communication framework

Validation
Emotion
Reassurance
Activity

### Validation

- It involves listening well – and showing the person you are interested in them
- Try to understand how the resident interprets the world and environment around them
- Avoid any attempt to impose your view of the world on the individual

### Emotion

- The second stage of the VERA framework is paying attention to the emotional content of the communication
- Acknowledge the person's feelings
- Paying attention to the emotional content underlying the resident's attempt to communicate ensures that meaning is extracted - even when communication is difficult to understand

### Reassurance

- Reassurance is any verbal or non-verbal act of communication that seeks to reduce a person's distress by demonstrating kindness and concern
- Reassurance can be conveyed by saying 'it will be okay', or through a kindly smile or a moment of hand holding
- It may also involve giving the message that something is being done

### Activity

- The fourth stage acknowledges that each interaction with a resident who is confused provides us with an opportunity to learn about what is useful or helpful to that person
- Staff should consider what activity would be helpful in that moment e.g. sitting and listening with a cup of tea.....

## 7 Stages of dementia

### Stage one

No cognitive decline

#### Signs and symptoms

- Has no memory loss
- Mentally healthy
- People with no dementia would be considered to be in stage one

### Stage two

#### Signs and symptoms

- Forgetfulness associated with ageing
- Forgetfulness of names
- Forgetfulness of where familiar objects may be left

### Stage three

#### Signs and symptoms

- Increased forgetfulness
- Slight difficulty concentrating
- Decreased work performance
- May get lost more often
- Difficulty finding the right words
- Noticeable cognitive decline

Average duration: 7 years before onset of dementia

### Stage four

#### Signs and symptoms

- Difficulty concentrating & managing finances
- Decreased memory of recent events
- Travelling alone to new locations
- Trouble completing complex tasks
- May be in denial about their symptoms
- May start withdrawing from family & friends
- A physician can detect clear cognitive problems during a patient interview and exam



## Positive risk-taking

- Understand the concept of positive risk-taking
- Understand the concept of 'silent harms' and the implications for practice
- Be able to identify ways in which positive risk-taking could contribute to achieving good outcomes and quality of life

## What is positive risk taking?

- Positive risk-taking is weighing up the potential benefits and harms
- It involves using available resources and support to achieve the desired outcomes
- 'Positive risk-taking' is a clear statement of action and intent

## Silent harms

People with dementia can be subject to 'silent harms' when those who support them are risk-averse. Those who support are focused with physical safety, rather than the achievement of meaningful quality of life.

## Status quo

Care homes frequently operate on the basis that 'doing to' and 'doing for' residents reduces risks or even in the false belief that it eliminates risk.

Such risk aversion ironically runs its own risk of depriving people of mental stimulation and retention of basic skills.

## Key points of positive risk-taking

- The focus of positive risk-taking is on making good decisions about risk, it is the taking of calculated and reasoned risks, not leaving things to chance
- Over protecting someone with dementia can limit their capabilities and potential
- Making decisions (however well-meaning) is exercising power. The aim is to give people living with dementia this power

## Change of approach

People with a disability and older people are being actively encouraged to increase their independence and decisions about the services they receive.

The focus is now more on enhancing people's abilities rather than concentrating on their disabilities.

## 7 Stages of dementia

### Stage five

#### Signs and symptoms

- Major memory shortages and need some assistance to complete their daily activities
- Memory loss is more prominent and may include major relevant aspects of current lives

Average duration: 1.5 years

### Stage six

#### Signs and symptoms

- Extensive assistance with daily activities
- Forget names of close family members and have little memory of recent events
- Many people can remember only some details of earlier life
- Difficulty counting down from 10 and finishing tasks
- Incontinence (loss of bladder or bowel control) can be an issue
- Ability to speak declines
- Personality changes, such as delusions (believing something to be true that is not)
- Compulsions or repetitions of behaviour
- Anxiety and agitation may occur

Average duration: 2.5 years

### Stage 7

#### Signs and symptoms

- Many not have the ability to speak or communicate
- They require assistance with most activities (e.g., using the toilet, eating)
- Lose of psychomotor skills, e.g. the ability to walk
- Average duration: 2.5 years