

Personhood

A story-telling approach

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Personhood

“It is a standing or status that is bestowed upon one human being, by others, in the context of relationship and social being. It implies recognition, respect and trust” (Kitwood, Dementia Reconsidered, 1997 p8)

Narrative as fundamental to understanding ourselves – we understand ourselves to the extent that we understand the stories of which we are a part

Our sense of self is shaped by the stories we tell about ourselves and the stories that others tell about us. Kenyon and Randall describe these as inside-out stories and outside-in stories

The narrative self

Personhood and narrative are linked when we

Recognise

Respect, and

Trust

the stories of people living with dementia, and the process of story-telling

Personhood and narrative

Three features of 'narrativity':

Narrative agency

Narrative consistency and cohesiveness

Emplotment

Narrative agency

- a) Being able to express oneself in a form that is recognizable as a story, even if one's linguistic abilities are limited/compromised
- b) Having the opportunity to express oneself narratively

What is recognizable as a story depends on how we draw the boundaries of conformity to story-telling rules, habits and customs.

Generally speaking, the Western concept of a story includes the speech/text as having a beginning, middle, and end (linearity), a degree of representation (alignment to 'what really happened'), a degree of grammatical structure (allowing for recipients to infer actors and entities populating the story-world)

Example:

A bad man walked in. Then a beneficent sorcerer pulled the lever, and the bad man was instantaneously inebriated.

A splubba walked in. A gingy beebed the yuck, and the splubba was orped.

Oe splubba fibblo. Sim oe gingy beebie ca yuck, i ca splubba orpa

For people living with dementia difficulties encountered with expressive language and loss of memory for recent events, and the disorientation to place and time may limit the possibility of engaging narratively with the world and others

If one expects a higher degree of conformity to narrative rules, habits, and customs, then it is possible one could see people living with dementia as losing narrative agency sooner rather than later

Opportunities for story-telling: People with dementia may find themselves constrained in two ways:

- a) A loss of control – decisions made for them and lessened opportunity for social interaction
- b) The 'meta-narrative' (outside-in story) of dementia that focuses on decline, loss, fragmentation of cognitive functioning, and recuperation of agency eg 'wandering', and 'challenging behavior' as symptomatic of dementia rather than meaningful behaviours in a different story-world

Narrative dispossession:

the narrative dispossession of people living with dementia can be seen as a function of how we conceptualise and operationalise narrative and narrativity



Narrative care

Narrative Care simply asks us to see the person in front of us as an individual whose *identity* cannot be separated from the intricate web of stories that define her/his life. Narrative Care helps us understand that they do not only *have* stories to *share*, but without those stories they would *not exist*. Narrative Care is about finding ways to explore and appreciate these stories, and creating opportunities to both honour existing stories and to create new ones

Narrative Care requires us to become more narratively literate in order to:

Recognize

Respect

Trust

the story-telling process in maintaining personhood

Recognize

Reconfiguring narrative agency – the ability to tell stories:

Symbolic expression of stories: dance, movement, art, music

Narrative quilting

Recognize

Reconfiguring narrative agency – the ability to tell stories:

Joint authorship: picking up fragments and working with the person living with dementia to shape a story

Allowing people living with dementia to contribute to the narrative of others i.e. how do they contribute to our ongoing stories? Not just as recipients of care but in changing our lives and our selves

Respect

Reconfiguring narrative consistency and coherency:

Recognising that alignment with 'what really happened', is only one way of understanding the reality and importance of the story

Instead of looking for linear stories, we might think of narrative quilting – story fragments linked by theme or meaning rather than linear events

Respect

Reconfiguring emplotment

Focus on 'small' stories – those that privilege the fleeting and fragmented as contributing to the establishment of personhood in everyday interactions

Respect

Remember:

- Stories shape who we are and who we are with others
- All stories are different
- It is in the story that we come to accept ourselves and others
- Story-telling and story-listening build relationships

Trust

Narrative Care: Train the trainer

A training program in four modules in narrative care for health and social care professionals, community groups, and others

Module One: Foundations of Narrative Care

- Overall Purpose of the Training
- Breaking Down Terminology and Where Narrative Care Comes From
- Closed Stories and Moving Beyond Stories of the Past
- Key Concepts of Narrative Care

Module Two: Narrative Care Begins at Home

- Benefits of Narrative Care
- Benefits of Lifestorytelling
- Caring Listeners: The Heart of Narrative Care
- Effective Storylistening
- Autobiographical Work: narrative Care Begins at Home

Trust

Module Three: Engaging Others and Program Design

- Exploring Training Theory and Approaches
- Multimodal Approach, and Why It Matters
- What Does this Mean for How You Provide Training to Your Participants?
Designing a Program (objectives, participants, planning, materials, resources, budget, etc.)

Trust

Module Four: Implementing a Personalized Narrative Care Program

- Exploring, Creating, and Choosing Narrative Activities/Engagement
- Personalized Program Design With Feedback

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Trust