



Pauline Phillips

"Loneliness is the Ultimate Poverty"

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"Uplifting Dementia"

*"Empathy is.....
seeing with the eyes of another,
listening with the ears of another
and feeling with the heart of another".
Alfred Adler*

An ageing population and living with dementia:

Our ageing population is rapidly increasing globally, yet within the last 25 years it has become sadly and increasingly evident that majority of our younger generation are responding to this change in generational dynamic by withdrawing and limiting positive connection and exchanges with the older generation.

This is subsequently creating segregation between age groups, a sub division within human kind, and clearly exposes evidence of a cumulative, destructive lack of consideration towards our elder population.

This unfortunate attitude is creating a disturbing foundation instituted upon disrespecting and dishonouring those who have lived prior to us, and of whom have fought for our future.

*"Caring for our seniors is perhaps the greatest responsibility we have. Those who walked before us have given us so much and made possible the life we enjoy".
John Hoeven*

Evolution ensures each generation survives a lengthier existence.

This is partially due to ongoing progressive change as the populace adapts to the environment, inclusive of the substantial impact of modern medicine.

Older age may be challenging to us all, however, it may conversely be viewed as the most valuable chapter of the entire life experience.

Enabling and supporting our senior population by embracing and respecting age, may potentially create opportunities to heighten influence towards positive transformations in what may seem quite a callous mindset by many in our community.

This in turn may convert current societal stereotypical attitudes from evolving, based on impressions about ageing that at times plague many of us, and instead promote a sense of expectation and liberation.

It is critical we respond to the needs of our older community by committing to the development of initiatives that strive to meet the diverse requirements of this age group.

Adequate frameworks are essential in ensuring our older populace are provided with the necessary respect and reverence, to continue 'living well', to uphold and promote 'ageing well' and endorse 'healthy ageing'.

Consumer directed care is a basic human right and encourages intensified awareness of the specific requirements of each person, acknowledging the preeminent need to cater for individualised care.

Healthy ageing approaches should permit a senior person to articulate awareness of their necessities, discuss their fears, thus helping us to develop interventions that allow participation in choice and decision making, equipping all of us as, together, to face the future as one.

It must be projected that the compelling factor here is, *'going without should not be an option'*.

Advocating a solution and providing a supportive community may well be the catalyst to our seniors living with a greater sense of contentment, pleasure and exuberance, as opposed to a sense of bleakness and ill being.

It is paramount that we highlight what are considered the principal necessities for each older individual to continue living a fulfilling, stimulating, caring and reverential existence.

The objective should be to provide enhanced opportunities to facilitate the reality of the 'golden years'.

Dementia may challenge us all, because of the fundamental complexity of the condition, however it is time we regain our focus, first and foremost, and behold life through the eyes of the person living with dementia.

Habitually, our lack of human decency, bred by prejudicial assumptions regarding dementia, affect how we treat people, thus depriving them of basic biopsychosocial needs, such as compassion and empathy.

Our own subjective conjectures and ignorance have much to answer for.

These dehumanising attitudes are often a significant source instigating intense suffering within the lives of our increasingly older population, particularly people who live with dementia.

We are very quick to proclaim these discriminating verdicts, without even considering the person living with dementia as being the only true expert linked to their own personal experience.

People living with dementia are the actuality, and thus it is only they who truly live the reality we need to grasp, and it is only they who can illustrate to us the diverse and intricate possibilities within their individual truth.

Hence, by listening to them, we gain an unbelievable insight, into a certainty of which may eventually, reverse all the stereotypes that WE have created about them.

Contemplate what it must feel like to be ostracized, judged, and treated as if you have lost your humanity just because you have a condition that affects your brain.

As we know, dementia does not damage a person's humanity, the necessity to communicate, feel, continue relationships with others, and to feel appreciated and 'affirmed' as a complete being within this current moment.

Losing one's memory does not mean losing oneself.

To care for or understand a person living with dementia in a respectful and dignified manner, is to fundamentally enable them to continue living life as they know and choose it, thus requires a major conversion of 'our' inner fears and impressions associated with dementia.

It is essential we are held accountable for the twisting of information shaped from intellectual suppositions and uncertainties, fashioning typecasts that have been for too long, based purely on our own internal dread.

These arrogant and heartless suppositions about those we consider to be 'different', ghettoize and isolate people living with dementia in an extremely personally destructive manner.

Let us contemplate the perspective of people who live with dementia, without the judgmental generalisations that we tend to place upon them.

The best we can do, as cognitively aware individuals, is assume, given the incredibly diverse variables of every individual who lives with dementia, correlated with our limited ability to grasp life through the eyes of these incredibly resilient and courageous people.

Consequently, it is likewise and therefore, our responsibility to dispel those stereotypical myths, by navigating change, that shall enable people living with dementia to live their lives free of the stigma we have so recklessly pitched in their direction.

Instead, maybe we should examine and encourage intensified awareness regarding the specific rights and needs of those who live every single day with this condition.

We must accordingly, cease the inequitable labelling of people, which continue in our so-called educated society, to be founded on attitudes constructed about a condition we can barely conceive.

Hence, if we truly understand the reality, and specific needs of every individual living with dementia, in relation to their perspective, we might significantly and profoundly influence their lives positively, minimising core suffering and inner pain from occurring.

Simply by 'listening'.



The context of pain:

Chronic, relentless, debilitating and poorly managed intractable chronic pain in older people living with dementia is habitually discussed as a significant indicator for incapacity and rapid deterioration.

It is similarly often proposed, that when a person living with dementia doesn't actually 'verbalise' they are experiencing considerable physical pain, we may erroneously presume that they are not suffering pain at all.

Or even, as some medical professionals may suggest, people who live with cognitive changes do not experience pain on the same level as a cognitively aware individual may.

What rot!!~

How overwhelmingly heinous is this neglectful cruelty, and flippant disregard for a person's suffering????

As I often reinforce, this is incorrect information, founded on our reliance exclusively on the verbal aspect of communicating pain.

This is a highly inappropriate error in judgement, given people living with dementia feel pain just as acutely as we do.

People who live with dementia, people who have dialectical inconsistencies, or dysphasia, can generally and effortlessly communicate their suffering and anguish, as made evident by observational and visual fluctuations in their functional status, physical ability, nonverbal means of communication, and/or behavioural expression.

Nevertheless, if we are not attuned to these forms of interaction, a person may be discounted, thus feelings of alienation and loss of camaraderie may occur between individuals.

This places a person at considerable risk.

Hence it seems unquestionably challenging for 'us', as the cognitive aware person, to display enough suppleness in 'our' attitude, to enter into this territory of silent interaction, for the sake of another.

Does this not seem like we have everything the wrong way around given we are not the ones with cognitive changes????

Does this again not make you question our conceit in expecting everyone to modify themselves and change for us???

If only we could use our perceptive ability, compassion and empathy to be a little more flexible in OUR approaches, we may make life less problematic for highly vulnerable people who interact differently to what we unfairly anticipate and expect.

Consider and reflect now on a category of pain that is even harder to express, let alone conduct a dialogue about.

This is pain within the context of emotional, psychosocial and internal agony.

A pain comprised of loneliness, misery and despair.

A pain like no other apparently, and one that is habitually overlooked and unheeded.

Some may say the most debilitating, crippling and excruciating pain of all!!!!!!



Isolation and loneliness:

Years ago, I found an anonymous quote that demonstrated clearly the feelings and words of an older lady living with dementia, when her need for intimacy and social interaction was neglected.

*'If I am no longer a woman, why do I still feel like one? If no longer worth holding, why do I crave it? If no longer sensual, why do I enjoy the soft texture of silk against my skin? If no longer sensitive, why do moving lyric songs strike a responsive chord in me? My every molecule seems to scream out that I do, indeed exist, and that existence must be valued by someone! Without someone to walk this labyrinth by my side, without the touch of a fellow traveller who understands my needs of self-worth, how can I endure the rest of this unchartered journey?'.
Anonymous.*

Grief, loss, past trauma, aging, living with dementia, and other co-morbidities, all may generate feelings of agonizing inner pain.

Imagine the core suffering that occurs when you desperately want to connect and can't, because no one bothers to interact with you, on a level that you can respond.

Imagine having your rights, choices, and preferences stripped away in this manner, without having a say.

The labelling and condemnatory attitudes of others towards those that are older or living with dementia might often generate attitudes that are tremendously demeaning, unfairly precipitating feelings of poor self-worth, self-esteem, despair, depression and unworthiness.

This then rapidly triggers ill-being and emotional agony.

Our purpose should be to create well-being within the lives of our senior population and people living with dementia.

To truly achieve this, we must generate culpability and responsibility towards improving and refining, not ignoring, the life quality of people who are at obvious extreme risk due to neglect, and lack of social inclusion.

This could be supported by the summation that it should be easier for us, again, as purportedly intelligent individuals, to use our powers of empathy and insight, to do everything we can to implement a considerate process based on the ethos of “caring for another” unconditionally.

This would allow identifying and resolving past and present issues that might potentially be a source of anguish and pain for the person living with dementia and linking into positive and joyful aspects of that person’s life and history.

This maintains, and ensures, individual needs are revered from the past, during the present moment and for the future.

By undertaking an understanding of the person, instead of viewing them as a condition, it is hoped, that for the person living with dementia, having cognitive changes does not in any way compromise their lifestyle or the ongoing enjoyment of it.

Isolation and loneliness is an evident killer of the soul!!!!



Purpose is central to how we envisage ourselves within the world, and how we maintain our sense of self.

This includes the need to be accepted and valued.

Our spiritual side assimilates our physical, emotional, and social relations within our personal existence.

The meaning of our reality is often defined through our relationships, connections, and self-image.

If we ignore the essence and the spirituality of any person, we may essentially extinguish their spirit.

It is becoming increasingly obvious and apparent within the older generation, inclusive of people living with dementia, how lack of social interaction, enforced solitude, reduced human contact and feelings of exclusion, may precipitate harmful biopsychosocial mood-altering spirals, consisting of intense misery and worthlessness.

These emotions, when sustained over extended periods of time, may lead and manifest into such internal hopelessness, they often become a principal root source to people socially isolating themselves.

This may generate further withdrawal within oneself, at times exacerbating and triggering a more rapid, aggressive, decline and deterioration into fragility.

The need to deliver spiritual sustenance to older people and especially those living with dementia is particularly crucial.

This is especially relevant given a person with cognitive changes may be unable to efficiently access the resources previously available prior to the onset of dementia.

Furthermore, loneliness is not exclusive nor limited to those that live alone or in complete solitude.

Some people living with dementia articulate they have experienced the most intense feelings of segregation and unforgiving remoteness, whilst surrounded by, or living with a number of individuals.

People who reside within residential aged care, have at times expressed how shockingly brutal and dehumanising is the sensation, when one suddenly comes to the horrifying realisation that they are deemed so unimportant, they may as well be labelled 'invisible'.

When a person feels unloved they may lose their hold on the tentative connection to all of those simple joyful moments, that enhance their lives.

If we eliminate every link connected to a person's ability to continue existing as they desire, we may be sentencing them to this harsh fate, through our careless, unthinking thoughtlessness.

We may in fact be considered their 'executioners', given it is we who engender this rapid decline, deterioration and eventual death of spirit.

Why? Because we give off the impression that we just don't care enough.

Honestly, the ugly reality is, in many cases, a demonstration of how humanity is inherently self-indulgent and self-involved.

It is therefore logical that this hedonistic approach to life eventually slaughters the souls of those who are neglected.



These core negative emotional states consist of punitive extremes, especially for a person living with dementia, whose present may transform rapidly when needs are not met, individual preferences dishonoured, or when their perception is clouded by an overwhelming persistent sense of anxiety.

This punishing turmoil may plunge a person down into the dark depths of desolation.

It may further develop into a terrifying existence, if not alleviated, eventually pulverising a fragile spirit already possibly broken by wretchedness.

It could appear as a nightmarish prison, forcing a person to confront and confirm their deepest fears.

These fears in turn may redefine their reality, by exposing every vulnerability, and crushing any light that may still flicker within.

Loneliness cruelly lashes away at a person's faith and courage.

When we spend days, weeks, months, without meaningful interaction, this persistent, unyielding disenchantment may be the impetus to a person questioning the place they hold within the world.

Their personhood may feel as if its slowly and painfully being stripped away, layer by layer, as they silently scream within, and hurtle into nothingness.

The loss of joyfulness:

When we anticipate or experience joy, it delivers intense warmth and pleasure, of which we hold close.

This pleasure stimulates gratifying emotions, delivering wonderfully dynamic sparkles of energy that dance with gay abandon through our minds and bodies, all the way down to our fingertips.

Visualize now, sitting and thinking about life, clutching frantically at these fragile and delicate memories that sporadically make your heart soar.

When possible, you can relive these recollections, played back in your mind, like an old-fashioned flickering film.

Sometimes you may even actually feel the power of the magic that once was.

It is as if your mind becomes the only reliable source of happiness and pleasure.

Nonetheless, as time passes, and human interaction changes or evaporates, this warmth and contentment begins to slowly dissipate.

This hostile sense of extreme loss, deflates you like a balloon releasing a last pathetic puff of air.

This excerpt from one of my previous papers captures the essence of what transpires when a person is dreadfully lonely, isolated and lost, whilst struggling internally, because they can no longer find themselves within the vast remote world that has disconnected from them.

“Imagine for a moment, searching for a distinct place within the world— the harder you search for that space, the more bewildering it becomes. Your innate desire is to connect, but your need for inclusion cannot be met. The tougher and more puzzling this search becomes, the more anxious and uneasy you feel.

Those around you just don't seem to appreciate your reality, nor provide you with the companionship you so crave and yearn for. You feel utterly alone, with an overwhelming sense of core suffering and misery— you withdraw into yourself. It seems sometimes that the people around you think you have lost your humanity. Those who look after you constantly stare through you with unseeing eyes.

You sit in the chair in your room, alone, feeling overpoweringly miserable, frustrated, anxious and afraid.

You can no longer put these feelings of unhappiness into words. You feel disheartened, and cry a lot over nothing much at all, because you do not feel your life has any meaning any more. Worthlessness intimidates you continually". (Leah Bisiani, 2012, 2017)

Now, imagine feeling this way and searching desperately for the sentiments that represent the happy, carefree times from your life.

Deep within your heart, you just know they were once part of your existence.

But no matter how hard you try, you never quite manage to grasp or revive those blissful and joyous feelings again.?



"You were a wife. You know this. But all you have are pictures. But it was only yesterday wasn't it? You want someone to care enough to save you from this fate. Surely someone is wondering where you are? You know you have children, but where are they?? Where is my dear daughter who I showered with love and butterfly kisses from the day of her birth? Surely my darling baby boy was wanting a cuddle from his mama???? So where are they now? Have they all left you?? Have they taken them? Where they real? Where are all those friends you had always supported with every ounce of your energy, through your entire life?? Surely the phone is plugged in?? Why does it not ever make a sound? Like a silent cruel instrument of torture, mocking you as you desperately wait to hear the sound of its annoying ring. You yearn to hear that blasted ring.....where is everyone, anyone, someone, to pull you out of this quagmire and save your soul. It is sucking you under and you feel like you are going to suffocate..... 'help me' you silently mouth into nothingness.....". (Leah Bisiani, 2018).

A solitary tear is released from a sad clouded eye and falls to the floor unrecognised.

Human beings are proud and sometimes fickle creatures.

When we are in pain, or ill, or need assistance, this is when we are least likely to ask for help from those we love.

We all have that innate yearning and utmost faith in those who know us better than anyone else, to be there for us in times when we are broken.

We desire and wish for them to see when we struggle, through our eyes, so they may be there for us in our hour of need, without ever having to request it.

Because who wants to beg for scraps of attention after all???

When living through such dreadfully vicious inner pain, swiftly and abruptly, a person may come to the realisation, that they have waited too long, and it is possible their agony will now never be realized nor alleviated.

'Maybe I should have called and reached out to those who have so insensitively forgotten me?! Maybe they would then have beheld my sad eyes and witnessed the excruciating pain I hold within my crushed soul.

Maybe if they had acknowledged my suffering, then this would have made the difference required to cease this devastating spiral into nothingness". (Leah Bisiani, 2018)

But they just continue to hectically rush around, totally absorbed by their own self-consumed lives.

A person may recognize it's now way too late, because they lack the ability, emotional strength, fortitude and resilience, to even articulate how this turmoil has destroyed them. The words may swirl within their head in a tangled mess.

Waiting for a rescuer that never comes can be emotionally draining and exhausting.

The evil sinkhole that inadvertently becomes a person's biosphere, if not recognised, may continue to twist and turn downwards, shrouded by darkness, where every thought becomes caught up in a miserable vortex of pain.

Imagine now, "You have become so overwhelmed by this atrocious experience, you actually never manage to express your anguish, as your spirit continues to weep within the confines of your mind. Some part of you still forever waits, in solitude, for what seems like an eternity.....as your gentle, wavering spark is slowly, agonisingly extinguished". (Leah Bisiani, 2018)

Subsequently, we must loudly articulate and strongly emphasise to all of humanity the destructive effects of blatantly dehumanizing and disrespecting another by discounting the gravity of emotional distress and pain they experience.

Not only does this generate a negative and damaging atmosphere in which a person may feel powerless to preserve any meaning to their existence but can continue on to the more insidious path of eventual fatality.

The sad failure on our part to recognise this inherent weakness in our own natures, can inadvertently grind the feelings of those that are helpless, to a point where they may die from a loss of faith in humanity, and a broken heart.

This could be viewed as the ultimate betrayal in regard to the 'meaning of life'.

The search for meaning:

It has been established that solitude and remoteness may generate situations in which emotive needs may be overlooked, or these needs 'assumed' to be unimportant, thus individual rights may be pitilessly discounted, dignity dishonoured, and a person left to face extreme distress, pain and misery.....alone.

This elimination of human contact, could, and often does, appear to older people and the person living with dementia, as a total disregard of their personal needs, leaving them feeling dejected, corrupted, miserable and desolate.

They are quite correct in this synopsis of why they suffer such inner chaos.

Furthermore, as soon as an individual has been diagnosed or acknowledged as having dementia, often a common and immediate reaction by those around them, is to assume they have likewise lost their right to define their own identity.

This is essentially yet another discriminatory postulation based from a cognitive vantage point.

As discussed, these rash and reckless attitudes harmfully affect and damage lifestyle, thus rapidly remove meaning from the existence of a person living with dementia.

The language of communication:

People living with dementia often attempt to search for such meaning by reminiscing about the defining periods within the rich tapestry of their lives.

Without the ability to connect and retain relationships with those around us, it is possible a person may lose faith in who they are, whilst their inherent personhood fades, thus they feel undervalued.

We are additionally and enormously disinclined to recognise, encourage and rejoice in most human abilities, including differing methods to communicate, and this unfortunately may deprive every one of us.

Social contact and positive interface with others is a crucial feature in preserving and shaping our individual uniqueness, as we often define ourselves based on this rudimentary human necessity.

Enabling someone to again reopen the lines of communication may profoundly change a person's life experience.

Some people living with dementia may find that dementia conveys experiences and understandings that those of us without the condition cannot even imagine, and furthermore, there are most probably no specific ways for them to express this verbally.

Does this not additionally, imply, activities of significance developed for individuals with dementia may assist them to experience positive emotion, thus communicate specific information about preferences that may be considered personally unique and meaningful to them?

Person-focused approaches, instigate dramatic changes within the malevolent philosophies of care associated with living with dementia.

Care needs should always be adjusted and refocused towards each individual, by understanding that biopsychosocial needs require merging with more functional and clinical paradigms, to truly foster a balance.

This is a rudimentary dynamic associated with an area which is habitually misunderstood, yet it's the most definitive and critical factor in salvaging a person's spirit.

Hence it is vital that we consider the significant affiliation between these features and connect them to the person.

Consider, instead of denying personhood, we adopt a more empathetic and compassionate approach towards understanding and caring for older people and people living with dementia, so that it is ensured our presence impacts positively on their lives in a deferential, affectionate and tender manner.

“It is an absolute human certainty that no one can know his own beauty or perceive a sense of his own worth until it has been reflected back to him in the mirror of another loving, caring human being”.

John Joseph Powell, The Secret of Staying in Love.

We are all a product of our own life transitions:

By recognising the life transitions of another, interacting on a human level, connecting with compassion, and acknowledging emotional desires, we may effectively endorse social understanding, intimacy, comfort and warmth.

This then enables a person to experience some level of control over their own lives.

Regeneration of past relationships and jubilant, happy, carefree times, may additionally aid in fulfilling attachment needs, which strengthens the enduring bonds that may possibly exist in one's life, and form a connection between generations.

This can be accomplished through ongoing interaction of a nature which advances techniques to engage in any activity that convey significance to the individual's past or present life.

It is often discussed, that empathy and emotional comfort engender softness, intimacy, the calming of pain and sadness, as well as resolution of the need to express stress related emotional states such as anxiety and agitation.

Delving into the past memories of any person, including people living with dementia, may be considered an admirable approach in re-establishing or re-generating lost emotional security and cherished relationships.

Especially acknowledging the relevance of how long-term memory is a significant positive feature related to dementia, of which is retained for the lengthiest amount of time.

Maybe this can be further expanded upon through the utilisation and encouragement of quality time with relatives and friends, routines, pets, books, hobbies, familiar music, physical activity, and lifelong customs.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to remind people of the simple pleasures, that may be central to their happiness, such as a beautiful garden, birds singing, smelling a flower, a sweet cup of tea or a warm hug.

What a delightful and pleasing way to acquire and share the foundations and knowledge about another human being and acquaint yourself with the sparkle that is shining within their soul.

Envision the remarkable implications of capturing the life story and memories of another.

It is possible to collect a vast fountain of valued and precious information and insights into a person, illustrating to us all how such treasured moments in time can exemplify who they have become.

This powerful awareness enables us to visualise a less fragmented image of a person, and instead digest the phenomenal lifetime that has become the person in front of us.

What a privilege to be invited to enter such a remarkable world of diversity and wonder, and to share the extraordinary magic with those who breathed it.

Knowing a person on such a glorious, personal level, may be the catalyst to creating opportunities that eliminate their inner despair and pain, imparting hope, uplifting the soul and raising self-worth.

The emphasis should therefore be focused wholly on the person, to guarantee our attentiveness and utmost flexibility captures their essence, values their life experiences and acknowledges the place they continue to hold in the world.

Only then can we embrace a person within their own private actuality and empower ourselves to preserve their integral rights as a human being.

The exquisiteness of nostalgia and validation of life experiences:

Recognising the evolution of a person throughout their own splendid journey and divergent life transitions, allows us to honour their humanity, retaining those wonderful elements required to enable us to cultivate compassion by learning to respect and value others.

We cannot deny how these myriads of experiences contribute to a lifetime of development and must ensure these aspects of a person's spirit are always retained, holding a significant place within.

We do not have the right to savagely reject others nor strip people of who they are, purely because we are so unyielding, and lack the ability to see life through their eyes.

Reminiscence and validation are both a powerful and fascinating technique used when acting compassionately and initiating positive interaction.

Through the precious, poignant beauty of nostalgia we can empathetically capture the essence of a person, whilst linking and validating their long-term passions, sentiments and memories, to the present moment.

This heightened awareness allows us to function on a transformed stratosphere and permits us to demonstrate untainted deference for lives well lived.

Why would we not desire to sit down with a person who is older and usually much wiser, than us? Why would we not be caring enough to enter, learn and discover what it is that makes their world real and tangible?

All people are made up of innumerable captivating moments in time, superb stories, heartbreak we possibly cannot envisage, poignant and sweet memories, horrific loss, incredible joy, and uplifting recollections that make their story complete.

These wonderful images of life, painted by the artist themselves, can successfully close the gaps between our broken generations and foster total appreciation of the differences that make us so very special.

The use of old, faded, photographs that may curl at the edges, hold moments in time for eternity. Song and dance can sift through the years and make smiles appear where none have flitted for so long. Sentimental possessions and little trinkets may all generate contact and interaction on a level that does not only rely on verbal interaction.

Anything can be shared if only we showed some interest.

“The worst part of holding the memories is not the pain. It's the loneliness of it. Memories need to be shared”.

Lois Lowry

Children are also a wonderful and delightful source of non-judgemental, unconditional honesty and acceptance.

They are exceptional in the innate skill they possess in ‘taking people as they come’.

They do not have inbuilt stigmatised or stereotypical arrogances clouding their virtuous innocence.

Only we, as the role models of the younger generation, foster negativity in our children's hearts and minds.

Therefore, it is we who must create change, teaching our offspring to develop the skills required to mature in a fashion that allows humanity to learn to cherish one another, and exist together as one, *because* of our differences, and not in spite of them.

“What should young people do with their lives today?? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured”.

Kurt Vonnegut



Music- dance to the beat of your own drum:

“Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything”.

Plato.

When we contemplate music as a feature of a person's personality and recall, we appreciate the sensory stimulation and beautiful therapeutic effects and response it arouses.

The benefits aren't unexpected, given this form of therapeutic encounter has been utilised for people living with dementia for countless years, and research supports the corporeal joyfulness, and utter bliss that music inspires, as it takes us on a person's melodic journey.

It's an illuminating therapy, when used correctly and the individual, specific choices and preferences of the person are honoured.

Keeping active through music maintains physical and cognitive ability and strength for longer, which in turn allows independence to be retained for longer. The endorphins that these types of therapeutic activity create also convert a sense of ill-being and confusion, to one of alertness, positivity and wellbeing.

The most pertinent benefit of music is the social interaction it can stimulate, thus fostering improved communication, empowering people to express themselves non-verbally through melody and dance.

People who live with dementia frequently connect through music, as it is more often an encounter that is recognised as a commonality that can be shared, pursuing happiness amongst the generations.

Music seems to touch the soul of us all.

I have witnessed myself, people who rarely verbalise or speak, break out into song, word perfect, due to relating to their own innate musical appreciation, and connecting into their long-term memory. Some people will clap and smile and harmonise. You may see an unexpected little boogie or dance, or a person may kick up their heels, remembering the exquisiteness and loveliness of life through song.

Music may connect wonderful memories and bring alive again a lifecycle of charming, shining experiences, written to a sentimental melody.

It's a moving, dazzling, glorious encounter, when used appropriately and cathartically, whilst the distinct predilections of the person are honoured through this alluring medium.

“Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness”.
Maya Angelou



Conclusion:

In retrospect we must never disregard the fact that older people and people living with dementia have deeply intense, profound and emotional requirements, just as we do, that include being considered, needed, and valued; to have occasion to care and feel worthy; to be devoted to, and loved, in return; and to communicate emotion without restraint.

We can never place people at risk by dishonouring them nor their existence.

What we must do is appreciate and respect each lifespan, and ensure we implement everything within our power to continue life as that person knows it.

No one deserves anything less.

It may be argued, that by assisting a person living with dementia to survive in a world that is constantly changing, focusing on what they can do instead of what they can't, understanding who they are within, and what they essentially need in life to keep their spirit whole, we may need to develop more intuitive and accurate understanding of a person's spiritual and socio emotional needs.

“At a time when an older person is experiencing the most dramatic changes in their life, they cannot be placed in a situation where who they are, and have been, becomes secondary to the priorities and demands of where they are, or who is caring for them. Becoming older, living with dementia and/or having conditions that debilitate, does not mean losing oneself or one's humanity. If needs are not met effectively, then that person is likely to deteriorate, thus withdraw into their own personal, lonely reality. However, if needs are met then a person is able to embrace life and their personhood once more, and again retain that distinct and integral place they hold in the world”. (Leah Bisiani, 2010).

Within every situation there is always an opportunity for people living with dementia to feel a sense of personhood, being appreciated and respected, to be truly understood and to have those deep core experiences or feelings recognised and appeased.

Having someone experience and share your experience within the moment, may make the difference between a person living with dementia living an isolated life of suffering, sorrow, grief and despair, to one of gorgeous relationships, confidence, dignity, well-being and connection.

Every day is a fresh and beautiful new beginning for a person living with dementia.

From the moment they open their eyes to your sparkling smiles, and are treated with love, compassion, care and respect, then this start to the day immediately provides a positivity and wonder that can defy confusion.

It sets the scene for the rest of the day.



This more evolved method of insight into each person's personal experience living with dementia, may lead to a reassessed conceptualisation of the influence of dementia, in which they may essentially have an additionally special, exclusive and personal experience *because* of their dementia.

We may then take care to a level in which we honour the partnership between the care partner and person receiving the care, and instead of a solo experience, it resonates within us and develops into a journey of togetherness, value, joy and meaning.

Let us alleviate this pain of internal core suffering, and enable people living with dementia to live a life that is uplifting and full of joy.

Let us never allow any person to lose who they are, nor the motivation required to flourish and blossom.

Instead it is up to us as human beings to nurture our own humanity to support civilisation, and value the cultivation of compassion, by respecting our vulnerable older population, and especially people living with dementia.

We have the ability, and the chance, to cease our disturbing, obscene, self-indulgent behaviour by utilising our emotional intelligence, so that we can truly engage with those in need, whilst seeking and discovering some sense of purity within ourselves.

We ought to inspire ourselves to WANT to become a better version of ourselves every day.

No person warrants the severe sentence of harsh isolation, and we are neither judge nor jury to decree it.

This is a shamefully cruel existence that we hand out so insensitively, and we cannot excuse nor justify our part in this miserable scenario, nor this outrageous crime against the defenceless.

We can acquire the ability to develop compassion, we can critique isolation and reintroduce community and culture changes, whilst humanizing our great power and precision in response to a more humane philosophy.

Bottom line: our job is to maintain happiness.

We must do whatever it takes to ensure this completeness is what the person experiences every moment of every day.

Instead, *“validate me and who I have been my entire life. See ME, not the condition I live with. I am more than dementia. I am amazing and am my own story. If you bother to know me, and listen, you can be my saviour and I will never stop smiling. Meet me in the middle, and then you will be able to sing my song with me. I invite you to MY journey”.* (Leah Bisiani, 2009).

Reach out and be proud to advocate and provide a voice of strength for the empathy revolution.

“Our task must be to free ourselves.....by widening our circle to compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty”.

Albert Einstein.



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