

CASA DE VIDA SENIOR LIVING
PERSON CENTERED APPROACH TO DEMENTIA CARE

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“You matter because you are you and you matter to the
last moment of your life. We will do all we can to help
you, not only to die peacefully but to live until you die.”

Saunders, 1976.

The facts about person centered care

Receiving care which puts the person with dementia's needs and desires first is called a "person centered approach." Here's how we implement it. In a nutshell

When someone has dementia it's easy to just see the illness, and forget about the person they used to be. The person-centered approach to dementia was developed to stop this happening and to ensure that the person living with dementia remains the focus – not the illness - and that they are always treated with respect, and as unique individuals. The premise, 'nothing about me, without me' is at the heart of the person centered approach.

Three facts worth knowing

1. The person-centered approach was developed in the UK by Professor Thomas Kitwood, a pioneer in the field of dementia care in the 1980s and has since received worldwide recognition and praise.
2. Person centered care has been shown in studies to reduce agitation and aggression in people with dementia.
3. Another study of person centered care showed it significantly reduced the number of people with dementia needing hospital treatment or anti-psychotic medication – both of which can be the result of aggressive behavior.

Three ways to make it work

If you're caring for someone with dementia you can ensure your care is more "person centered" 1. Giving a choice of food at mealtimes. Either ask what they'd like, or show pictures to help. Failing that, whenever possible, give them something they've always enjoyed, and would choose to make themselves.

2. Little things mean a lot – too much choice may be overwhelming but some is essential. For example, choosing which necklace, lipstick, watch or tie to wear, might seem insignificant, but it can make someone with dementia feel more in control of their own life.

3. Ask yourself: Am I seeing the world through their eyes? If the answer is yes (or as much as you can) you're using a person-centered approach and doing a great job.

Don't worry.

Many people who care for loved ones with dementia use the person-centered approach instinctively, without even realizing it, and with good results. Person centered care can make someone with dementia feel calmer and happier – which should make your life a little easier, too. But it's important not to berate yourself if you can't always do things the way they'd prefer. Doing your best is what counts.

The person-centered checklist

If your loved one is in a nursing home, you might want to check that they're receiving the person-centered care they have a right to.

Here's what to look out for to make sure their care plan is right for them.

1. Are they being treated with dignity and respect?
2. Do staff know their likes and dislikes, their favorite music, hobbies or when they like to take a bath?
3. Is their opinion and personality understood and taken into account?
4. Do they seem valued as a human being, regardless of their age or how advanced their illness is?

Good to know

The person-centered approach now underpins the vast majority of care for people with dementia. Most good nursing homes will already be implementing it and be very happy to discuss how they do this with you.

At Casa De Vida we are all trained in this.

The Framework for this approach can be seen in its entirety at:

http://www.alzheimer.ca/~ /media/Files/national/Culture-change/culture_change_framework_e.pdf