

Reminiscing, Poetry Writing, and Remembering Boxes: Personhood-Centered Communication with Cognitively Impaired Older Adults

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ABSTRACT. This article describes a method of facilitated communication for extending the well-known benefits of reminiscence by recording the words of nursing home residents and creating a concrete memory resource. Reminiscence sessions were conducted with five cognitively impaired older adults, whose words and phrases were arranged into poetry, revealing the essence of each person. Information gained was used to construct personal Remembering Boxes filled with meaningful objects and writings. As communication tools, the poems and Remembering Boxes helped staff learn more about residents, proving useful when residents were sleepless or agitated. Remembering Boxes offered residents

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enhanced interactions with their families and staff and greater control of those interactions. These tools can affirm the personhood of the residents amid their confusion and cognitive decline. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2003 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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Communication between caregivers and residents in nursing homes can be dependency-inducing and mutually unsatisfying. Analyses of caregiver-care recipient interactions in nursing homes have found them to be impoverished, centered mainly on care tasks and generally controlled by the caregiver (Baltes & Wahl, 1996; Gibb & O'Brien, 1990; Grainger, 1995; Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). The Communication Predicament of Aging Model interprets communication in nursing homes in terms of a negative feedback loop that results in excess social disability (Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood, 1986). The cycle begins when caregivers modify their style of communication based on automatic expectations of the older nursing home resident as incompetent and dependent. Such stereotype-based communication decreases the likelihood of meaningful interactions and reinforces expected dependent behaviors. Repeated exposure to this pattern of behavior may cause the older person to withdraw from activities, experience a loss of control, and have lowered self-esteem (Baltes & Wahl, 1996; McWilliam, Brown, Carmichael, & Lehman, 1994; Rodin & Langer, 1980; Whitbourne & Wills, 1993).

Nursing home residents with cognitive impairment are especially susceptible to the communication predicament due to the low expectations elicited by confusion and disorientation and to their reliance on the facilitative skills of the caregiver. Indeed, narrow definitions of skill and competence may cause caregivers to discount an older person who is still capable of communicating. Despite gradual decline in verbal skills, persons with dementia remain sensitive to nonverbal cues; and caregivers who are unaware of this may bypass opportunities for meaningful communication (Bourgeois, 2002; Ostuni & Santo Pietro, 1991; Santo Pietro & Ostuni, 2002). Remaining verbal skills may also be over-

looked by caregivers who do not take the specific needs of the cognitively impaired person into consideration during interactions. For instance, Sabat (1991) found that if one accommodated for the increased time necessary when conversing with an AD sufferer, a mutually satisfying interaction was possible. However, interactions become restricted or may not even occur if one abides by traditional conversational rules, typically shaped by western society's 'hypercognitive' ideals (Post, 2000; Sabat, 1991). Continued exposure to such poor social environments may exacerbate the symptoms of the disease, reinforcing stereotypes of incompetence and dependence (Kitwood & Bredin, 1992; Sabat & Harre, 1992).

The Communication Enhancement Model of Aging provides a framework for care providers who wish to forestall the negative feedback loop and its adverse consequences (Ryan, Meredith, MacLean, & Orange, 1995). The model conceptualizes interventions in terms of their emphasis upon the older adult, the caregiver, or the environment, but the driving force of all interventions is that interactions with older adults become increasingly guided by the individual characteristics of each person. Such individualized communication empowers both the caregiver and nursing home residents to have satisfying encounters, increasing well-being and the likelihood of successful interactions in the future (Baltes & Wahl, 1996; Brane, Karlsson, Kihlgren, & Norberg, 1989; Langer & Chanowitz, 1988). Even for nursing home residents experiencing the communication, memory, and behavioral difficulties of dementia, such empowerment is possible (Bourgeois, 2002; Norberg, 2001; Ripich, Wykle, & Niles, 1995). Harrison (1993) challenges care providers to see a cognitively impaired individual in terms of their entire life (i.e., past roles, culture, values). It is argued that the self persists throughout the course of dementia and that caregivers who ignore the personhood of the older adult create excess social disability (Kitwood, 1990; Kitwood & Bredin, 1992). Attention to the histories of residents is personhood-affirming, since it cues past instances of competence, focuses on the remaining strengths of the resident, and empowers the caregiver to find solutions that are mutually beneficial (Beach & Kramer, 1999; Dawson, Wells, Kline, 1993; Harrison, 1993).

Butler (1963) is noted as the first to call attention successfully to the benefits for older adults of life review, or reminiscence (see Webster & Haight, 2002). Reminiscence therapy has been found to engage the remaining capabilities of cognitively impaired older adults in nursing homes, leading to a decrease in depression, increased cognitive functioning, attenuation of behavioral problems, and an increase in the resi-

dent's engagement during interactions (Bender, Bauckham, & Norris, 1999; Baines, Saxby, & Ehlert, 1987; Goldwasser, Auerbach & Harkins, 1987; Woods & McKiernan, 1995). The sharing of common experiences and histories can lead to mutual respect and support between residents (Baines et al., 1987; Goldwasser et al., 1987; Woods & McKiernan, 1995). Staff members' newly gained knowledge of the individual leads them to see the resident in a different light and improves their attitude toward impending interactions (Bender et al., 1999; Mills & Coleman, 1994; Woods & McKiernan, 1995). However, the positive effects may diminish once reminiscence groups no longer meet, and only the staff members directly involved experience the benefits (Baines et al., 1987; Goldwasser et al., 1987). Moreover, while generic stimuli are often used to cue memories during reminiscence sessions, there is evidence to suggest that objects without personal meaningfulness may increase agitation (Namazi & Haynes, 1994).

Researchers have developed interventions that are meant to extend the positive outcomes of reminiscence activities beyond the group session to the daily interactions in the nursing home. Personalized memory tools designed to be used by staff in their care interactions with residents in nursing homes have been tested to determine their effect on communication. Memory books containing both personal (e.g., wedding photos) and orientation information (e.g., daily schedules) were found, in conjunction with staff training, to improve and increase communication between the residents and staff (Allen-Burge, Burgio, Bourgeois, Sims, & Nunnikhoven, 2001). Communication was also increased among the residents, and between residents and visitors. In a later study, positive effects of resident memory books and staff training on their use generalized to interactions other than those revolving around care (Bourgeois, Dijkstra, Burgio, & Allen-Burge, 2001). Resident verbalization increased, even when the amount of time allowed for the interaction was decreased, suggesting that the memory books enhanced their ability to generate novel statements without help from staff members. Staff facilitated conversation more by repeating their questions, acknowledging they were listening, and uttering fewer requests. In addition, interactions with the memory books improved staff members' ability to gauge how the resident was feeling.

Hagens (1995) developed the Reminisce and Write program, which extended the benefits of reminiscence sessions beyond the group in that the words of nursing home residents were recorded and arranged into poetry to be shared with staff and family. Participants' utterances, and later their poems, were read back during group sessions, allowing them

to feel proud of their accomplishments. In reading group poetry, staff and family were able to pick out contributions of specific persons. By capturing individual turns of phrase, idiosyncratic expressions, and explicit details during the Reminisce and Write session, the essence of each participant emerged in a way that was still recognizable years later. Past contributions to a group poem became a present voice for severely deteriorated residents when read aloud.

Writing groups have been found to enhance the personhood and self-esteem of residents in nursing homes by fostering an emphasis on enduring capabilities. Schuster (1998) found that members of a writing group experienced transformed relationships with staff and family since their writing was appreciated by themselves and others as purposeful and valuable. The writings of the residents had the effect of elevating their perceived status since many of their works were used by family and staff for special occasions. Koch (1977) used facilitated poetry writing groups in a nursing home to capitalize on residents' abilities and thereby improve the social environment. Koch reasoned that residents could use their remaining strengths for poetry—the music of ordinary speech and their lifelong memories and feelings. The poetry that was written by the residents, and read back to the group with the help of a facilitator, reminded the residents and others of their ability to feel as well as communicate. Furthermore, the short nature of poetry allowed the residents to take on the task, complete it, and feel proud of it.

For the present study, we built upon the Reminisce and Write program (Hagens, 1995) by linking the use of reminiscence and poetry writing to the development of personalized memory aids for cognitively impaired residents in a nursing home. Our aim was to develop a multi-faceted communication tool to extend the benefits of reminiscence therapy to the entire social environment. Five cognitively impaired residents participated in both group and individual reminiscence sessions over a three-month period. The residents' words were arranged into poetry, and the information gained during the sessions was used later to elicit family involvement in the construction of personalized Remembering Boxes. The usefulness of the poems and boxes as communication tools was evaluated over a 14-month period through participant observations and through comments elicited from staff and family. Within the framework of the Communication Enhancement Model, it was anticipated that staff members using the poems and Remembering Boxes would take a more individualized, personhood-enhancing approach to residents during their interactions, leading to more mutually satisfying communication. It was also expected that the poems and Re-

membering Boxes would help reacquaint family members with their loved ones' pasts and individuality, reactivate their family pride, and elicit more meaningful pleasurable interactions.

METHOD

Participants

Potential participants were identified by the leader of the previous poetry group sessions (Hagens, 1995), and their charts were reviewed for documentation of dementia-type behaviors. The core group of participants comprised five residents: one man and four women. All had some evidence in their medical chart of cognitive impairment (i.e., Mini-Mental State Exam scores, confusion, short term memory loss, disorientation, and wandering). Participants ranged in age from 77 to 90 years, with three of the participants over the age of 88. The participants had been in the nursing home for two years or less. Oral consent was obtained from each participant and written consent from Substitute Decision Makers.

Reminiscence and Poetry Sessions

A total of seven group sessions were held at the same time and day of the week: three before individual interviews, and four after the interviews. The sessions typically lasted about an hour in a casual setting, similar to having coffee with friends. The first author led the sessions, and the second author recorded all the relevant statements in large print for the group. Multi-sensory props were used to help stimulate memories for the theme chosen for each session (e.g., flowers for the Spring session and sand for the Beach session). As in Koch (1977), the ideas written down were periodically read back throughout the session to help the group see what they were creating and to stimulate further ideas. After each of the sessions, the group leader arranged the residents' words into group poems to be shared later with participants.

One-on-one interviews, lasting approximately 45 minutes, were held with each of the group participants. The purpose of the interview was to delve further into some of the meaningful memories that were raised by the individuals in the group. Since some participated in the group less than others did, information from staff and resident charts was also used to start the discussion. The residents were asked if they would like to

have a chat, and their conversations were taped for later transcription. The interviews were kept very informal to help the resident feel comfortable, with the general goal being to learn what has been important to the resident in their life. Special attention was paid to allowing extra time for responses from the residents. Individual poems were constructed from the information gathered in the interviews.

Remembering Box Implementation

The information from group and individual reminiscence sessions guided the construction of each Remembering Box. Families of the residents were contacted and asked to find objects for the box. In hindsight, it became clear that the knowledge already gained about the residents facilitated family involvement in the project. Specific, individualized requests demonstrated genuine interest in their family members' lives. All the boxes contained photographs, but otherwise each box varied according to what was meaningful in each resident's life. For example, one resident was known for her eccentricity, including smoking a pipe and owning hats and pipes to match her clothing. Thus, one of her pipes was included in her box, a fashionable hat box saved by the family. Photographs and other pictures were either placed in an album, or enlarged on a piece of sturdy paper, with the circumstances of the picture written underneath. Journals were also included in each box for users to record what they had discussed with the resident. Once the Remembering Boxes were constructed, they were tested with each resident in order to ensure that they had the potential to enhance communication, and that there were not any objects that would cause agitation or anxiety. The Remembering Box was placed in each resident's room along with an attractive framing of the individual poem, a large photograph of the resident, and information regarding the Remembering Box.

In-services were held to introduce the staff members to the purpose of the Remembering Box. We made suggestions regarding times when the box could be used but stressed that they would know, or perhaps learn, when the box would be most useful. Presentations were also made at a family council meeting and a board of directors meeting. A display board was erected in the main entrance to inform family and visitors about the project. The first two authors were participant observers of interactions with the Remembering Boxes over a 14-month period, elicited oral and written comments from staff and family about their experiences with them, and interviewed two residents about their experiences with the Remembering Boxes.

RESULTS

During the project, there was time for staff and residents to become familiar with the Remembering Box project and for observations of how the Remembering Boxes and poems evolved as communication tools. The boxes and poems were used separately or in combination, since some residents responded differently to each. Both achieved the goal of reminding the resident, family or staff member of enduring capabilities, thereby improving communication. One staff member said that using the Remembering Box “is how we get to relate to them.” The boxes and poems were used during the night shift when residents could not sleep, when residents were sad or anxious, or when staff had “a few minutes, from interest.” The willingness of staff members to create spare time in their very busy work day for conversations using the Remembering Box or poems affirms their perceived potential. Furthermore, staff made requests that poems and boxes be created for other residents whom they felt could benefit. Volunteer visitors currently use the boxes and poems and have found them useful to help residents initiate conversations and express their emotions. Staff members learned the times when the box was most useful for each individual resident (e.g., at night, after supper, in mid-afternoon). Three major themes emerged through discussions with staff, family and residents and our observed interactions with the boxes.

Learning the “Histories” of the Residents

The Remembering Boxes and poems, in themselves, provided information about the residents not previously known by staff members, in a format that was interesting to them. Thus, one staff member remarked that the boxes, “gave new, valuable information that you never knew before.” Furthermore, the nature of the information was such that it seemed to pique the interest of the staff in learning more about other residents in the same way. “It gives you an experience of how their life was. You wish you could know about everyone like that.” The residents who owned the boxes became aware of the new interest that staff and visitors were showing in their “histories.” One resident remarked, “It’s amazing how many people have come in and asked me if they could see it.” While staff recognized that the new information was interesting and that it enhanced their conversations, they also found it practical in terms of learning the likes and dislikes of the residents. For example, the

boxes were used by the activities department in order to gain ideas, or to help the resident with ideas during a creative endeavor (e.g., painting).

The new information from the Remembering Box transformed the way that staff perceived the resident, “[you] get a feeling of them as more of a complete person (i.e., quirky habits).” The background information also clarified, or facilitated their understanding when they were interacting with residents. “I got to know more about her, talk to her, capture the moment she was remembering.” Family members appreciated the impact of the box on the staff’s understanding of residents. “They help others (i.e., non-family) understand who the patient was.”

Additionally, the format of the poems and boxes provided, in Koch’s terms, a quick way to learn about a resident. This was welcome in an environment where staff often feel that they do not have the time it takes to have conversations that do not revolve around the task at hand. Staff members were encouraged to pick one item from the box to talk about if they were pressed for time. Also, choosing a separate picture to discuss rather than one from a photo album avoided the problem of feeling obligated to stay until the entire album was viewed. The poem was particularly useful with a resident who exhibited advanced word-finding problems and severe short term memory impairment. One remaining strength was her ability to read, which was also an activity she had enjoyed throughout her life. She was able to recognize her own words from the poem as she read and responded to others who read her poem with “yes, I said that!” Her memory loss made her anxious and agitated, but staff members were able to use the poem to quickly affirm her sense of self, which attenuated her fear and confusion about who she was.

Mutually Satisfying Interactions

Staff and family indicated that the Remembering Boxes and the poems enhanced the interactions with and for the resident. Boxes and poems were often employed when the older person was agitated or anxious, in order to redirect their attention to a more pleasant thought or memory. The following story illustrates the impact of the boxes on negative mood states.

Golda Ruben’s Story. Staff and family found it very difficult to get one resident, with the pseudonym Golda Ruben, to stop crying, as she did most of the time. They had attempted distraction, hugs, cups of tea etc., but nothing had eased her sadness for more than a few minutes. Mrs. Ruben would revert to weeping and moaning, and was essentially inconsolable. Staff felt that it took a great deal of their time and energy,

and upon learning of the Remembering Box intervention during in-services, requested that one be created for Mrs. Ruben even though she was not originally part of the project. They asked if a photograph of her daughter, who had died as a young woman, could be found and included. Mrs. Ruben often mentioned her daughter during the episodes of inconsolability, but staff did not know anything about her. When contacted, her son explained that the photo of the young woman on Mrs. Ruben's wall was in fact his sister, a university professor who had died in her 30's of cancer. Since there were no labels or cues, no one knew who this person was. Her photograph was included in the Remembering Box along with information about her life, successful career and children, in hopes of facilitating a mood transformation from sadness to a more peaceful and relaxed state of mind.

The Remembering Box was found to engage both staff and Mrs. Ruben long enough to facilitate a mood improvement, which came about fairly quickly and lasted much longer compared to previous attempts to calm her. Since the sadness often seemed to be focused on her daughter's death, it was possible to start with her photo, and acknowledge her sadness, but then to move gently to her daughter's achievements, the grandchildren, and topics related to her own life and interests. The initiative that staff members took, and their willingness to take ownership in requesting a Remembering Box for Mrs. Ruben demonstrated their belief in the usefulness of the intervention.

Family also experienced enhanced interactions due to the Remembering Box. On one occasion, Mrs. Ruben was attending a Bible study group with other nursing home residents and her son, with her Remembering Box. As the items in her box were being reviewed, she was asked whether her poem could be read to the group. The group members listened with rapt attention. Her son joined in the questions and discussion with his mother as the group learned about the contents of the box. Conversation was stimulating, everyone was participating and looking enthusiastic, Mrs. Ruben was beaming and telling her stories, and her son was interacting with her. There were displays of happiness from the group members and Mrs. Ruben. At the end, her son remarked "Well, that was the best visit with Mom I've had in a long time!"

Other Residents. The boxes were useful to the other residents in reducing boredom, sadness, and anxiety, and in conjuring up memories that made the resident happy. Staff members remarked that when they used the box as a communication tool, "boredom and irritability ceased . . . Sadness turned to pleasure . . . [it was] emotionally good, [the] resident [was] expressing happiness."

Day-to-day interactions, or those when the resident was not particularly anxious or agitated, also seemed to improve when the Remembering Box was employed. Staff indicated that the boxes gave them a reason to start a conversation whereas they normally would not have felt comfortable asking questions about the older person's past. For example, one staff member who used the box regularly, said "it allowed them to open up without bugging them." The items in the box also helped the resident expand on their stories. "[She was] able to tell me more, and with more ease than [if I just] asked a question." Thus, overall the Remembering Boxes and poems generally improved the quality of interactions from the staff point of view and from our observations of residents.

Resident Taking Control

The Remembering Boxes and poems allowed residents to take control of their interactions with others. "She took control of the conversation . . . she was carrying the conversation . . . she was remembering a lot." The satisfaction that the residents gained from being able to contribute to conversations made them eager to interact with the boxes and poems. The residents were not only able to contribute more to conversations but actually initiated them. "I am sitting here reading the paper and she called [me], . . . 'honey come!, come and see (sic) just a while, look what my son brought me!" Since the residents were experts about their pasts, they showed concern for how others heard what they were communicating. The residents wanted the story to be understood correctly. "If I'm there I like to explain it to people, I know about it!" The residents' renewed ability to be active participants made the staff feel proud of them, and they were able to feel proud themselves and of their stories. "I was very happy for her, she was able to tell me her love story." "[she] is very proud of it . . . [she] is able to tell me something as soon as I ask a question." One journal entry commented, "She is proud of the things she has done, and so am I. I will come back to talk to and learn from her." A resident remarked, "Friends come and I ask them to look in my box . . . it is nice for them to look at it, they enjoy it . . . I enjoy it if somebody else enjoys it."

DISCUSSION

The Remembering Boxes and poems facilitated staff knowledge about residents' histories, leading to more individualized communica-

tion. Families were pleased with the impact that the boxes and poems had on their interactions with their loved one, and in the increase in staff knowledge. The new knowledge of personal histories prompted staff to change their sometimes one dimensional perception of the older person as simply a resident who needs care, to an older person who embodies multiple dimensions due to varied life experiences (Kitwood, 1990; Kitwood & Bredin, 1992). Based on classic studies in social psychology, it may be argued that staff knowledge of residents' pasts (background, achievements, relationships) made them more aware of their own personal similarities to the resident, leading to an increased attraction and understanding of the older person (Allport, 1954; Newcomb, 1961). The outcomes of this program are consistent with previous research regarding reminiscence therapy, writing, and memory aids, which have all proved useful in increasing staff knowledge and have led to a changed perception of the resident as a more complete individual, thereby improving communication (Baines et al., 1987; Bender et al., 1999; Bourgeois et al., 2001; Koch, 1977; Schuster, 1998). As in the Bourgeois et al. (2001) study, the poems and boxes provided concrete memory aids that circulated the knowledge beyond the group and had an impact on the entire social environment of the nursing home.

The added dimension of poetry writing also elicited active participation on behalf of the residents, and hearing their words read back to them made them feel as though they were really being listened to by others. This practice also gave them cause to feel proud of contributing something to their social environment (see Langer & Rodin, 1976). The poetry component may contribute specially to improved communication because of its salience in the nursing home environment (Koch, 1977). Staff, visitors, and the residents themselves are often surprised at the idea of writing poetry in a nursing home, and even more so at the depth and creativity contained in the poems. The surprise makes the poems more likely to be read, remembered, and talked about with others. Also, the format of poetry, allowing for the combination of brief memories without explicit organization, works particularly well for group writings as well as for writings by people with cognitive impairment. Furthermore, poetry is instantly engaging for both the resident and the visitor or staff member, a valuable feature for a communication tool in a busy nursing home environment.

The Remembering Boxes and poems enhanced staff and family's interactions with residents, whether they were particularly agitated or anxious, or not. In line with findings regarding reminiscence therapy (Beach & Kramer, 1999; Mills & Coleman, 1994), the knowledge and understanding that staff gained through the use of the boxes and poems

allowed them to find more mutually beneficial solutions to behavior problems, leading to more satisfying interactions. Furthermore, the accessibility of the box and the poem improved interactions beyond those occurring only in the reminiscence session. Interestingly, the solutions were not necessarily focused on changing a negative mood to a positive state, but more simply, the staff's newfound knowledge allowed them to make better choices about how to respond to a negative mood. For instance, after learning of Mrs. Ruben's daughter, staff better understood the source of her sadness; and after listening, they were able to introduce topics that would decrease her anxiety. In some cases, it was beneficial to Mrs. Ruben for staff to simply acknowledge her sadness, without redirecting the conversation to less emotional topics. Thus, with increased information, staff became less concerned with changing the behaviors of the residents and more inclined to examine and alter their own behavior. This is also consistent with previous findings regarding meaningful memory aids which changed the focus of staff communication from requests to more facilitative communication (Bourgeois et al., 2001).

The improved understanding staff members displayed about residents' feelings and abilities is in line with research on the impact of personalized external memory aids (Bourgeois et al., 2001; Mills & Coleman, 1994). The increase in assertive behavior by residents in the current project is congruent with very recent work in this research program (Bourgeois et al., 2001). Our facilitated communication approach has extended the previous work by explicitly using writing as a medium to increase both the contributions of residents to their social environment and staff knowledge of residents and by eliciting the residents' active participation in the making of the poems and the Remembering Boxes. Resident involvement in the creation of the tools should make them that much more individualized and effective. The focus on strictly personal memory aids creates a culture in which the personhood of the resident is paramount. Thus, the poems and boxes act as a practical tool for staff, but the interactions that stem from them are also viewed by residents as valuable, a blend that is often hard to produce from nursing home interventions. Furthermore, the flexibility inherent in the Remembering Box generates a continually evolving tool; each time the box is used, new stories and ideas emerge that can be added, reducing the likelihood that staff and visitors will become bored with the box. Interventions such as this offer older adults some control in an environment where there is often little opportunity to do for oneself (Baltes & Wahl, 1996; Lubinski, 1995). Thus, the personalized memory aids are not only an effective device for staff, but also act as a tool for residents

to aid them in expressing themselves, bringing others' behaviors into alignment with their enduring capabilities and needs.

The current project, with a limited sample size, reveals the range of possible positive outcomes of this approach to facilitating communication in longterm care. The qualitative outcomes observed highlight important areas for future research. An intervention study comparing cognitively impaired older adults, with and without Remembering Boxes and poetry writing, on measures of their adjustment to life in a nursing home and on their communication experiences, would be valuable. It would also be useful to assess the separable impacts of the three components: group reminiscence, poems, and the Remembering Boxes. Furthermore, this project suggests potential benefits for older adults with cognitive impairment and their family caregivers in the community. Thus, when a diagnosis of dementia is first received, the older adult and family can capitalize on existing memory, and may find life story writing and creating a Remembering Box to be therapeutic activities. Then, in the event that the older adult moves into a nursing home, the meaningful items and writings in the Remembering Box may offer comfort to the resident in unfamiliar surroundings, while also acting as a communication tool for staff. In summary, this method of facilitated communication offers rich opportunities to implement the five personhood strategies outlined by Kitwood (1997): recognizing the individual as a person, validating emotions, taking into account personal preferences, collaborating, and facilitating accomplishments.

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