

Sample Lecture for Breakfast Club In-service

Communication fulfills a basic need in our lives to connect with others, to impart information and to share our experiences. Communication through language and talking with others is especially important.

When language skills decline, as they do for people with dementia, it can affect many parts of that person's life. Therefore, it is very important to help residents with dementia to maintain their language skills as long as possible. The Breakfast Club is one way to do that.

We know that social interactions can often stimulate use of language and communication among people with dementia. With the Breakfast Club, we will set up a social situation, using familiar tasks such as preparing breakfast, to improve language and communication and to maximize the person's remaining abilities.

In helping people with dementia, primary care aides learn to understand the "language" and gestures of the residents they care for. Many times, the primary care aide understands the communication of the resident better than the resident's own family does.

For example, they know that when "Mary" says, "cup! cup!" it means she is thirsty and wants a drink. It takes familiarity with Mary and experience to put together the connection that for Mary, "cup" means thirst.

(May ask for other examples from the inservice participants.)

Other communication techniques that may be used to encourage and stimulate conversation during Breakfast Club include:

- **Repairing:** Providing a word, phrase, or utterance that corrects (repairs) the resident's comment, or fills in missing information. Repairing allows us to correct a resident's comments without discouraging their attempts to communicate further.

Example:

Resident says: "Look at the salad."

Instead of saying, "No, Mary, that's not salad, these are eggs," the facilitator would say: "Yes, look at those eggs."

- **Acknowledging:** Responding in a way that indicates understanding of the resident's comments or understanding of the resident's desire to participate in the interaction. Sometimes acknowledging requires us to recognize non-verbal communication, such as the resident looking for something on the table.

Example:

Resident says: "Good. Good, good." The facilitator would say, "The eggs taste good, don't they, Mary?"

- **Expanding:** Adding a little more information to the statements or utterances of the resident.

Example:

After acknowledging the resident's communication in the last example, the facilitator might add: "The eggs taste good with toast," or "Eggs taste good when they're scrambled."

- Extending: Keeping the conversation going by introducing another aspect of the subject:

Example:

"What other kinds of eggs are good for breakfast?" or "What else do you like to eat for breakfast?"

As residents with dementia have more and more trouble with their memory, it becomes more difficult for them to make the connections that are needed to understand and communicate with others. They forget names for people and things and have problems completing their thoughts. This makes it difficult for them to keep up a conversation with family, staff and friends, and, in turn, leads to more confusion, and sometimes to social withdrawal and depression.

Residents with dementia probably experience the same feelings of frustration and isolation that any of us would feel when trying and failing to communicate with someone else, someone else who speaks another language, for example.

Residents with dementia usually retain some kinds of long-term memory well into the late phases of their illness. Settings that trigger the long-term memory and the familiar experiences stored there, can help these residents take up past social roles and perform tasks that are related to these roles. What's needed is the familiar, comfortable setting—the resident often cannot retrieve the past social role out of the context of the familiar setting.

Breakfast Club attempts to set up a familiar setting, a warm and accepting atmosphere where residents are helped to use their remaining abilities to assume past roles with competence. The familiar tasks of preparing, serving and eating breakfast, and then cleaning up after it, help them to feel comfortable and competent once again when taking part in tasks that once were a routine part of their everyday life experiences.

Communicating with another is the ultimate social risk. People who are comfortable in a situation will take more risks. Residents with dementia who feel comfortable in a social setting will feel encouraged to communicate and will frequently retrieve social skills and language skills which have been unused for a long time.

Breakfast Club gives residents the chance to step out of a dependent role and into a decision-making social role in which they can interact with others to accomplish an important task. Breakfast Club stimulates communication with others and enhances quality of life and sense of well-being.