



‘Love is like a butterfly: occupying people living with a dementia in care homes.’

David Sheard, Director of Dementia Care Matters describes The Butterfly Approach™ demonstrated recently on TV aiming to improve quality of life for people living with a dementia.

In the recent BBC 2 series ‘Can Gerry Robinson Fix Dementia Care Homes’ a broken system was shown needing to be fixed. Battling apathy, complacency and low expectations business guru Gerry Robinson brought in myself David Sheard, Director of Dementia Care Matters and my colleague Anne Fretwell from Merevale House in Warwickshire to demonstrate a model of person centred care that works known as the ‘The Butterfly Approach’.™

As a profession Occupational Therapy has led the way in highlighting the difference between ‘activity’ and ‘meaningful occupation’ (Perrin and May 2000) building on the work of Professor Tom Kitwood (1997). The concept of focusing on well being was developed further by Errolyn Bruce (2000) and in the USA Virginia Bell and David Troxel promoted The Best Friend’s Approach to Dementia Care (1997) whilst Professor Dawn Brooker at Bradford Dementia Group identified the foundations of person centred care (2007). Yet the journey to realising true person centred care remains a long way off when a BBC programme can expose the care sector in such a wanting way.

It must be acknowledged that many managers, nurses and care workers are deeply committed and working hard to improve quality of life in dementia care. At the same time the painful truth must also be confronted that sometimes in life “we cannot see what is staring us in the face. We walk around with our eyes closed to the obvious. We manage to avoid feeling the very real experiences going on around us We may even go so far as to deny what is really happening” (Sheard 2008). The BBC programme highlighted what a qualitative observational methodology can reveal about the quality of interactions in a care setting. On a % basis the outcomes of 100 qualitative observational

audits conducted across care homes in the UK by Dementia Care Matters between 2000 and 2006 revealed.

Level 1 Homes	- achieving exceptional person centred care	= 5%
Level 2 Homes	- providing highly skilled loving care	= 10%
Level 3 Homes	- good dementia care	= 15%
Level 4 Homes	- below average	= 30%
Level 5 Homes	- critical level of poor care	= 30%
Level 6 Homes	- crisis level with major concerns	= 10%
(Sheard 2008).	-	

If this persists 20 years after Kitwoods initial work on establishing person centred care then we have a long way to go in achieving meaningful occupation for people living with a dementia in care homes across the UK. Feeling the boredom of social warehousing is a shock. As one Manager said to me 'I was quite mortified because I thought we were a good home. Sometimes we're afraid to see what is actually happening.'

So What is The Butterfly Approach™?

All of us will have had moments in life when we felt bored, lethargic, aimless and lacking in energy. At some point these feelings will move on because opportunities come along in life (Sheard 2007). Dementia Care Matters uses this principle through the metaphor of a butterfly to enable nurses and care workers to grasp as Dolly Parton sings 'Love is like a butterfly.'

Butterflies are colourful, can flit around a room or be still, can change the moment and can brighten a second in someone's life – being person centred is similar. In a busy day being person centred is knowing how to touch peoples lives. All of us can live in the moment, all of us can change someone's day through small things. (Sheard 2007).

The Butterfly Approach builds on this by establishing five key principles in its training.

- ✚ Butterflies know themselves and work from feelings, from their spirit on the inside and not just from doing.
- ✚ Butterflies need environments to be full of things 'stuff' to use with masses of rummage items around.

- ✚ Butterflies know how to be good at both flitting creating 30 second 'activities' but also are good at being still.
- ✚ Butterflies get rid of all negative and controlling care.
- ✚ Butterflies need groups of people at similar points in their journey of a dementia to be matched together to enable a clear focus.

Practically this means 'Filling Up a Dementia Care Environment' with:

- ✚ Sensory items – busy aprons and waistcoats.
- ✚ Domestic items – dusters, carpet sweepers.
- ✚ Comfort items – dolls, prams, soft toys.
- ✚ Rummage items – boxes of handbags, trays of jewellery.
- ✚ Cognitive items – shopping catalogues, poems.
- ✚ Movement items – scarves for dancing, bubbles.
- ✚ Musical items – instruments, music posters.
- ✚ Spiritual items – pictures of waves, birdsong.
- ✚ Normal life items – socks to pair, shoe laces.
- ✚ Work life items – envelopes, jobs from the past
- ✚ Fun items – puppets, feather boas.
- ✚ The 'Art' items – photos, paintings.

It also involves training and coaching staff how to increase their level of positive social interactions.

The Butterfly Approach requires management commitment, real leadership, a willingness to take risks alongside promoting peoples rights to quality of life and not just quality of service. Turning boredom, lethargy, sleeping and staring into space into positive social interactions is a skill. Dolly Parton sings 'Love is like a butterfly, a rare and gentle thing.' The challenge in dementia care is to stop what Gerry Robinson found. Apathy, complacency and a broken system needn't be common. It is possible to start turning staff into butterflies where meaningful occupation is no longer rare but everywhere.

References

1. Parton D (1976) Love is like a butterfly. Carlin Music.
2. Perrin T and May H (2000) Wellbeing in Dementia: An Occupational Approach for Therapists and Carers. Churchill Livingstone.
3. Kitwood T (1997) Dementia reconsidered: the person comes first. Open University Press.
4. Bruce E (2000) 'Looking after well being – A tool for evaluation.' Journal of Dementia Care 8 (6):25-27.
5. Bell V and Troxel D (1997) The Best Friends Approach to Alzheimers Care. Health Professions Press.
6. Brooker D (2007) Person-centred dementia care: making services better. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
7. Sheard D (2008) Enabling: quality of life – an evaluation tool. Alzheimers Society.
8. Sheard D (2007) Being: an approach to life and dementia. Alzheimers Society.

To purchase a copy of the DVD 'Can Gerry Robinson Fix Dementia Care Homes' produced by the BBC/Open University please visit the Open University website at www.ouw.co.uk

To explore various resources which compliment the programme go to www.open2.net/dementia/

For futher information on The Butterfly Approach™ go to www.dementiacarematters.com.

or contact:-

Dementia Care Matters
29 Bloomsbury Place
Brighton
BN2 1DB

Tel: 01273 242335