

HOLISTIC THERAPY

Creativity applied to sadness (7/12)

DESCRIPTION

This activity can help to alleviate sadness and help with low moods, stress, anxiety, and numerous other emotions. The power of the human touch cannot be underestimated. It builds connection and has been used for thousands of years to calm, soothe and destress. Everybody needs a little bit of TLC (Tender loving care). In a care home setting, sometimes the only physical contact that the elderly person receives is in the form of personal care. But this can be very impersonal and rigid and can often leave the elderly person feeling vulnerable and not capable. With this activity, there are many benefits.

The elderly person will choose what therapy they would like and when... Feeling they 'have ownership' once more on their body and who touches it and when. The power in this alone cannot be underestimated either.

The largest organ in our body is our skin. Our skin sends good and bad touch sensations to our brain. When we engage in pleasant touch, our brain releases a hormone called oxytocin. This makes you feel good, and creates emotional and social bonds. Oxytocin is a hormone known to facilitate social bonding and touch releases oxytocin. The increase in oxytocin helps with relaxation, sadness, stress, and anxiety.

Through the various therapies and pampering options, the elderly person can take some time out just for themselves. Holistic therapies have been proven to be beneficial on all levels, mentally, physically, energetically and emotionally.

For example, a hand massage can help to restore balance in the body by removing any blockages. They can help you sleep better. Decrease anxiety and stress. Increase flexibility in fingers and wrists. Decrease swelling. Get oxygen-rich blood flowing into areas that are sore or stiff. Relieve headaches. And much more. Taking time out for a foot spa, a hairdo, some nail painting, or any act of self-love and self-care all have wonderful effects on our wellbeing.

OBJECTIVES

- To promote wellbeing
- To alleviate sadness
- To promote relaxation -To lower stress
- To release oxytocin
- To give choice and ownership when it comes to touch
- To create a pleasurable, enjoyable experience where the elderly person feels special and cared for.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

A brochure or laminated cards, with a list of therapies available.

Hand massage. Foot massage. Footbath. Hair wash and hairdo. Nail painting.

A footbath. Towels. A variety of nail polish. Oil for massage.

A list of contraindications for massage. Optional but would increase value to the activity: If the carers did a short on hand and foot massages. And/or Holistic Therapy.

IMPLEMENTATION - INSTRUCTION

First, have a meeting to discuss with management and staff to see who this appeals to. Does anyone have a background with any alternative or holistic therapies? Is this something staff can see will bring a holistic approach to their caring and to their center? Would any staff be interested in doing some training? Can this be budgeted for?

After this meeting, ask all the elderly if this was something they would be interested in and which therapies they would like. Do up a list with their name and therapies they would be interested in. Cross-check that any condition they have or medication they are on is not contraindicated to their therapy/therapies of choice.

Have a foot bath box set up (buy one or more depending on the size of the nursing home and potential demand. Towels.

Have a nail box set up, with a kit for nail painting: nail polish. Nail polish remover, cotton pads, creams, etc.

Hand massage box set up, towels, oils, cushion to rest hands-on.

Foot massage box set up, towels, oils, cushion to rest feet on.

A brochure or set of laminated cards is made. People can then choose that as part of their day, they would like to avail of this therapy. It can be organized in advance or if the carer sees the need, (the person looking sad) they could produce the brochure / laminated cards, and the elderly person could choose to pick one of the choice therapies or pampering activities and the carer would do this with them.

POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS

If this was something that really aligned the values and aims of the nursing home. Staff training in holistic therapies could be a huge benefit to all of the carers and all of the residents. A holistic approach is an approach that looks at the 'whole' person, not just their mental health needs. It is an approach that supports and values their physical, emotional, social, and spiritual wellbeing.

A Holistic well-being day room could be created within the home. Here people could go to focus on their wellbeing, and avail of some therapies and pampering. Relaxing music could be played. Inspirational and uplifting books and movies could be made available in this space. This could become a healing space within the home. A place the residents could go to, to improve their own well-being, destress, relax, and unwind.

If it was proving to be a huge success, the option of hiring a holistic therapist for one day a week for room, so that extra holistic therapies could be made available, with a book in system.

EXPECTED RESULTS

We would expect to see a tool like this being embraced and used by the residents, not only at times of sadness and times of stress but also in the prevention of these emotions. We would expect to see an improvement in wellbeing and relaxation. A lowering of anxiety and stress. Better sleep. Improved concentration. We would expect that the residents would be very happy to have a choice once more about when and how they engage in physical contact. We expect that when the 'Whole' of the person is being acknowledged, valued, respected, and honored, through holistic therapies and pampering. This has the potential for tremendous results on many levels.