

Change Ideas for Bathing

Typical issues & evidence of discordance:

- Resident displays anxiety, anguish, and combative behavior
- Injuries to both staff and resident

Barriers:

- Bathing is considered a private experience
- The bathing experience is physically and emotionally cold
- Sterile, institutional and functional environment

Goals:

- A positive individualized bathing experience, shifting from facility-directed to person-directed bathing
- To reduce injuries to residents and staff caused by the current facility-centered bathing routine

Infrastructure helpful to support the change:

- A team empowered to change practices. Team members include staff members who are directly affected by current bathing practices, with participation from residents and families.
- Adequate supplies for bed baths
- Adequate supplies and accessories for making bathing rooms more private, warm and comfortable
- Routines built around individualized bathing

Measurement possibilities:

- Number of residents screaming, calling out, vocally or nonverbally registering their disapproval
- Number of incident reports related to bathing, including possible injuries to residents and staff

Questions to consider:

- Would you take a bath here?
- How close is our bathing process to the process that you yourself use in your home?
- Is it functional or personal?
- What would be the benefits of changing the process?
- What would you change?

PDSA Cycle:

PLAN: Engage a team of interested and committed people including residents, staff and family members to make bathing a less stressful or potentially traumatic event for all.

DO: A bathroom beautification/deinstitutionalization initiative based on data collected that tracked resident discomfort during bathing.

STUDY: The number of agitated residents and/or the number of incident reports related to bathing

ACT: Continue to evaluate and explore other potentially comforting change ideas.

Change Ideas:

- Ascertain the resident's former preferred behaviors, needs and schedule related to bathing.
- Ask the residents a series of questions about routines before moving to the nursing home or talk to family/friends of the resident.
- Does the resident need assistance with bathing? If not, resident can bathe on his/her own.
- Establish preference for bath or shower, time of day, leisurely activity (book, glass of wine, 45 min minimum) vs. functional routine.
- Residents should be bathed in accordance with their response. A resident may enjoy bathing while enjoying a book and a glass of wine. The bathing experience should be duplicated as closely as possible.
- Create an environment that contains distractions that are pleasant. Ask the residents what they would like to see in the bathroom. Resident responses may include plants, music and other pleasantries.
- Take strides to create a more home-like environment by asking the residents what their bathrooms were like at their own homes before moving into the nursing home.
- Consider personal items that can be used in the tub with residents to make the process more pleasant. Examples include bubble bath, bath salts and bath pillow.
- Consider warming lights to avoid residents being chilly when getting out of the tub or shower
- Consider what items could make the experience more comfortable, for example warm/soft/fluffy towel and caring conversation from a trusted caregiver.
- Provide as private an experience as possible by eliminating supplies and equipment storage in the shower area that will be needed by other staff.
- Provide a buffer curtain that will protect privacy.
- Utilize shower capes

Associated principles:

- **Primary:** Create systems within which individual preference is honored and defended
- **Secondary:** Commit to de-institutionalize, wherever possible, the current setting providing personal living accommodations, a sense of peace, safety and community

Resources:

1. Barrick, AL, Rader J, Hoeffler B, Sloane PD. Bathing Without a Battle: Personal Care of Individuals with Dementia. New York, New York: Springer Publishing Company. 2001.