

Teaching Others about Person-Centered Care



In teaching others about culture change, an easy way to help people understand the need for change is by asking questions that relate to one's perceptions of home. "If I lived here, what would I need to feel at home?" "What does home mean to me?" Follow these questions with discussions on what the current practices are in your home.

An effective method of helping other people understand the concepts of culture change is by having them reflect on nursing home life from a personal point of view. This can be done in several ways, and in this chapter, you'll find a variety of teaching tools to help you spread culture change throughout your organization. Each of the tools is explained below.

Experiential Learning Design

As you create agendas for your culture change learning sessions, keep in mind this simple design for experiential learning:

- What do you want participants to know? (Head)
- What do you want them to feel? (Heart)
- What does their intuition, life experience or gut tell them? (Gut)
- What do you want them to do? (Feet)

Create an agenda for your training sessions that incorporate these components.

Learning Circles

A learning circle is a communication tool in which a group of people can openly share thoughts, concerns, and feelings about a specific subject in a safe environment. The learning circle members may consist of nursing assistants, residents, families, administrators, nurses, housekeepers, or visitors. Sitting in a circle, preferably with no table, they discuss a single topic, issue, or question one at a time around the circle. Open discussion is invited after everyone has a chance to share. A learning circle can help increase learning, relating, and problem solving.

Learning circles are particularly effective in stimulating dialogue on culture change topics. The learning circle allows everyone, no matter his or her title or role in the organization, to have equal input in the discussions. As a leader, encourage hope by acknowledging that you'll have a better chance of succeeding in making changes if everyone works well together, talks honestly with each other, and looks at your home with new eyes.



Teaching Tools:

For more information on this subject, download the "Open Sharing in Learning Circles" document from the Ohio KePRO Nursing Home Culture Change Resource Manual.

Home vs. Homelessness

In her research, Carboni defines home as a strong, intimate relationship between the individual and the environment and explains that the experience of home acts as a center to an individual's existence: it provides meaning in a chaotic world and lies at the core of human existence. She found seven separate and distinct aspects to feeling "home." The seven aspects are:

- Identity: A bonding of person and place, a sense of belonging
- Connectedness: The connectedness to people, with the place, with the past and with the future
- Journey: A sense of reach, a point of departure
- Privacy: Being able to decide when to be in and out of contact with others
- Power and Autonomy: Personal freedom to make choices and decisions
- Safety and Predictability: Having a sense of certainty and familiarity
- Lived space: A meaningful experience of space

Carboni describes home and homelessness as on a continuum. At the homeless end of the continuum, individuals who experience homelessness find deep pain in the lack of connection and an overwhelming feeling of the loss of meaning in life. Aspects of homelessness include a lack of identity, with a downward spiral into non-personhood; and a lack of privacy with no place one can retreat to or withdraw from, save a withdrawal into oneself.

Other aspects include an absence of meaningful space, and this all engenders a sense of powerlessness and dependency. The nursing home residents she interviewed were aware that it was the institution and not they who made the rules. Individuals who are at this end of the spectrum experience such deep pain that they either shut down or develop coping mechanisms such as “pretending” that allow them to cope with the pain of the deep loss they feel. Her research suggested that nursing home professionals often misinterpreted these coping mechanisms as acceptance or adjusting to the nursing home setting.

She found that the multiplicity of losses nursing home residents have experienced (even before coming into the nursing home), combined with the institutional nature of the nursing home itself, contribute to the reality that individuals coming into a nursing home tend to fall more towards the homeless end of the continuum. Using this research as a way to understand our deep human need for home, we have a better understanding that home is not just about making our nursing homes pretty spaces.

🔗 To sum up Carboni’s research, we are inadvertently making people feel homeless while they are in our care and this is causing their psychic despair. The good news is that we can reverse this by genuinely getting to know people and changing our culture from being institutionally centered and directed to being individually centered and directed.



Teaching Tools:

For more information on this subject, download the Home vs. Homelessness PowerPoint presentation and accompanying instructions for a group activity.

“Look At Me”

Produced by the Veterans Administration, this four-minute video chronicles the life of an elder, and demonstrates how we are not really “seeing” the residents for whom we provide care. This video can be used in conjunction with any of the other teaching tools you use.



Teaching Tools:

The teaching tools that cover this topic include a video clip, the “Look At Me” poem, discussion questions, and a sample inservice agenda.