

Welcome again to bi-monthly news from FutureAge Care. We promote lifestyle, leisure & wellbeing for clients in residential aged care, day centre and dementia care homes. Our theme this issue is "Fresh for Winter" - we hope to inspire you with some fresh activities, articles and resources to keep your Winter programs vibrant and relevant to your client's needs.

We are excited to officially announce the launch of Pathfinder College this month! Pathfinder is a college concept with primary aims to create avenues for continued learning, enjoyment and creative activity for your aged care residents. Designed for the elderly, residential care and clients with dementia, we will be offering a variety of college course packages that you can purchase, use and re-use for learning based activity, cognitive and sensory stimulation and something fresh for your group to look forward to each week.

Our courses are researched and created by course writers with expertise and relevant experience in their field. Each course package contains activity task material, facilitator's notes and guidance for 8 sessions with groups and individuals within the aged care setting. With easy to follow step by step instructions, health and safety, planning and preparation notes, we believe that you will enjoy the Pathfinder journey with your group. You will learn new skills on the way and each course ends with graduation at session 8, where you award each group member with a certificate of participation as supplied in your course package.

Our course range will be expanding as Pathfinder develops and the first courses available will include Etude© Dance (seated), Yoga (seated), Cooking, Art and Business Enterprise. So, it's back to College for your clients - to enjoy the things they used to do... or for something new to try!

Contact us if you would like to be kept up to date on our Pathfinder course packages and when they will be available.

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*learning - social activity - journey - sensory & cognitive stimulation -*  
**College for the aged care environment**



**LIFE Keys** are simple, effective small group studies to enhance your spiritual programs, topics on life and related discussions with residents and clients.

These 1-page studies provide conversation starters, questions and thought provoking areas on life to explore. Based on the Christian faith but also relating clearly to everyday life challenges, LIFE Keys are designed to help provide avenues for personal reflection and growth in relevant areas of life for everybody interested in participating (residents, clients and staff). Over time we will provide avenues for you to explore grief and loss, relationships with others and difficult memories. Our themes start with some interesting and thought-provoking topics to challenge our mindsets and get our minds used to being a little more reflective and open for some deeper topics in the future.

Simply download the studies from our Spirituality webpage and photocopy for use in small groups or 1:1 <http://www.futureagecare.com/spirituality.php>

### **Spirituality and Dementia – Jennifer Freeman, FutureAge Care**

*During my time spent as a visiting Chaplain and providing Pastoral Care support within aged care I have learnt many things from residents themselves. I also recall a very wise and experienced Chaplain highlight that a person repeating themselves is not necessarily a symptom of dementia: it could be a reminder from that person that although we are listening to them we may not be “hearing” them. What do we mean by this? Well picture, for example a male resident repeatedly saying to you “my wife did not visit today”. His wife may be deceased, or she may have visited or not visited that day, but what this man could be saying to you is “I miss my wife, I have been around her for 50 years and I miss her company terribly.” We need to listen with our ears and also with our heart.*

*Detachment from loved ones can be a major cause of depression and feelings of hopelessness among our residents. It is essential when providing emotional support and person centred care that we consider conversation about loved ones and family members/friends and the resident’s wider community of people who are important to them. Our conversation and demonstrated interest should be ongoing and not occasional: it may be important for a person to speak regularly about their spouse for example, even if their spouse has been deceased for many years. Conversation can also be invited by you as the initiator. Eg “Today’s menu is fish and chips. What meals did your wife cook that you enjoyed? Did she have a special signature dish?” At other times you will have the opportunity to listen as your resident shares one or two memories (sometimes the same memories, over and over. Remember that repetition could be dementia, or another reason ). Listening is an important key to your approach – the more we listen the more we learn. Turn to page 4 for a guide to developing person centred listening skills...*

Repetition in conversation

Listening with our ears

Listening with our heart

Family, friends & wider community

Person Centred Listening

Invite conversation

## BACKGROUND

All of us who work with people with dementia have experienced the frustration of sourcing something, anything, to relieve agitation levels in our residents, particularly non-pharmacological interventions.

While researching Meditation, I discovered John Levine's **Alphamusic**. As the name suggests, Alphamusic is specifically composed to change brainwave patterns from the *Beta* state to the *Alpha* state. High *Beta* levels are associated with the "flight or fight response" producing symptoms of anxiety, whereas the *Alpha* state induces deep relaxation and encourages the brain to produce the "feel good hormones" such as serotonin and dopamine.

## TRIAL

We purchased and trialed Alphamusic in our dementia secure units with very positive results. We created Feedback Sheets for the unit staff to comment on their observed results when they used Alphamusic compared to other music, in the secure units. Here are some of the results reported by staff:

*"Sue, this music is fantastic. It has made a difference with the residents and me. Everybody was a lot less anxious. It even settled "B" (a resident presenting major agitation levels)."*

*"Sue, I put the [Silence of] Peace CD on about half an hour before tea and I had everyone, (except "D"), sitting at the dining tables. I didn't have to chase anyone for tea. I love it."*

*"Very settled this evening. Residents less likely to get upset with other residents' noisy behaviour. Most sat quietly together for most of the shift. All settled for bed well"*

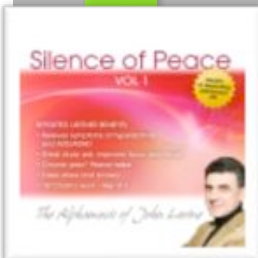
*"I have found Alphamusic particularly useful. When a resident is behaving in a disruptive manner, the music seems to keep the overall environment calm and the disruption does not spread to the others."*

*"Exceptional in palliation. As an environmental management tool - very much noticed by visiting family members. It has positive effects on the unit staff as well as the residents."*

As a result of this trial, Alphamusic is now the daily music of choice in our secure dementia units. If you would like to know more about the effects of Alphamusic on other symptoms of stress and anxiety, I am available to deliver free talks to professional groups in all health modalities. Please contact me through FutureAge Care: ph 02 9877 5208 [info@futureagecare.com](mailto:info@futureagecare.com)

**Sue Woods** – Diversional Therapist

**To purchase Alphamusic resources go to: <http://www.silenceofmusic.com>**  
- you can view the CD range, hear samples of Alphamusic and order online.



A wise Chaplain once said to me to always listen to every part of your resident's statement to you.

**Example statement:** "I have only just moved here/my wardrobe is empty."

There are two important parts to this statement that can be explored, but by nature we can sometimes tend to disregard the first half of the statement and focus only on the second part. Offering to help with filling the new resident's wardrobe may not be the most important response right now. "I have only just moved here" is a powerful statement and should not be ignored. Some questions and responses to this comment about just moving in can include: "How do you feel about moving here?" Or simply just repeating and reinforcing the person's statement back to them so that they know you have heard and understand them: "You have just moved here." - This then allows the person to make further comment on having moved here, which may open up some deeper emotions, concerns or fears. Eg "Yes, I've just moved here and this is the end of the road." During your listening, make note of key words that could be important. Eg "empty" as in "my wardrobe is empty" could also be a reflection of how the person sees their life now or how they feel about moving here.

This type of listening and response strategy can take time to refine, as by nature we can tend to want to say something to make the person "feel better". We may also feel tempted to divert the conversation to protect our own feelings of awkwardness about their unhappiness.

"Feel better" responses to our resident's difficult experiences and comments will only frame their words and seal them so that they cannot be explored any further. Diverting the conversation or making the person feel that they should "cheer up" and not be so negative is unacceptable and not at all person centred in approach or care. As caregivers we must allow and also create opportunities for people to reflect, talk, express, cry and share their fears, hopes, disappointments and memories.

#### **An example of a Person Centred Listening Approach:**

- 1) Listen more than you speak
- 2) Regard every part of the sentence and take note of key words (eg *I have, moved, empty...*)
- 3) Do not be afraid of silences: people with dementia need longer to think about what they want to say and you also need time to think about a correct and helpful response
- 4) You do not have to reply with an answer, a "fix" or a pick-me-up response
- 5) Do not rush the conversation and always maintain strong eye contact and attention to your person at all times



The key is to take your time, let the conversation evolve naturally and do not be influenced by time. Although daily routines are important, our residents' emotional wellbeing is paramount; concerns for depression and state of mind must be looked into thoroughly with the support of your colleagues.

Jennifer Freeman –Future Age Care

As the winter months fast approach us it can be challenging to keep life fresh, inspiring and mentally stimulating for our clients. Two great websites for you to consider are the **Powerhouse Museum** and **Simply Australia**.



[http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/exhibitions/never\\_done.asp](http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/exhibitions/never_done.asp)

The Powerhouse Museum regularly update their website pages with fresh, online collections that can be viewed and “virtual tours” of interesting artefacts and displays, a photo of the day and education notes that you can print/read to your group and use as discussion tools.



There should be something of interest for everyone on this website and if you have access to a laptop for 1:1 activities, we thoroughly recommend you use this website. Photos, topics and internet interaction can stimulate memories and reminiscing, provide the opportunity to validate one’s experiences and life story, engage people in discussion relevant to their era of life and culture, as well as enable you to get to know your clients better. These websites also contain a healthy balance of male and female topics and can spark your imagination for daily work tasks and related activities, which many enjoy.

A second website of interest is called **Simply Australia**:

<http://www.simplyaustralia.net/> which contains historical photos, memorabilia, interesting stories and topics ranging from transport history, sport, the arts, the bush, music, plus a “Sense of Place” and “Remember When” categories.

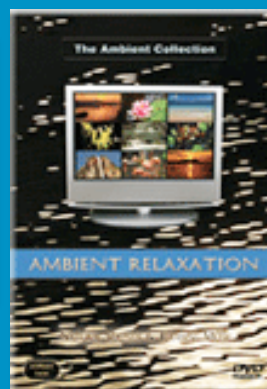
The added benefits of these online resources are that you can include your clients with dementia and those that are less responsive during discussion. Print out and laminate key photos and images of interest to your activity and/or include themed objects or other photographs that you may have access to from clients themselves. Memorabilia can also give you ideas on simple, working tasks and chores which some enjoy, keeping busy and achieving familiar home-style activities. These activities can also become a sundowning intervention where appropriate.



For example, with the laundry room image and website collection above you may wish to add laundry powder to a bowl of water and supervise a washing activity: rinsing, squeezing, drip dry and peg items to hang in the sun. Wash lightweight material squares, suggested sizes are 50 cm square, to keep your activity manageable for participants. Another example might be following discussion of Aeroplane jelly, to sit in a small group and make a jelly, taking turns to stir the jelly, then pour into several jelly moulds and sing the well known song.



## Leisure Activity Kit for Dementia \*Winter Offer\*



- **Sensory Samples** Audio CD: 60 minutes of ambient sound, music and effects for Snoezelen Rooms, Sensory and Dementia
- **Aqua Swim/Sunshine Beach** Audio Exercise CD: spoken gentle exercise for the very frail and clients with dementia
- **Ambient Relaxation DVD**: 9 visual tracks with optional ambient sound and relaxing piano music. Suitable for relaxation, environment enhancer, dementia TV alternative
- **Laminated A4 instruction cards** containing activity suggestions and uses for each resource
- **Winter Offer \$89 (rrp \$101.95)** \*offer ends June 30<sup>th</sup> 2008



### **Connect Workshops**

*A practical workshop for everyone involved with the care, contact and support of people with dementia.*

For Community Workers, Healthcare Staff and Police Officers.  
1.5 hours - including practical sessions and scenario role-plays.  
(15 people max p/workshop is recommended) Workshop is conducted at your site/venue

#### **Key Topics**

- What is dementia?
- What to expect – encounters with dementia in your work role
- How to maximise your encounter and conversations
- Listening Skills, Responses & Communication
- Practical Training Sessions & Scenario Role Play

**\$180 / 1.5 hours** Contact us to make your booking enquiry

*If you would like to subscribe or comment on our bi-monthly e-newsletter please Email: [jennifer@futureagecare.com](mailto:jennifer@futureagecare.com)  
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\*All activities and ideas mentioned in this newsletter are merely suggestions - care and attention to the specific needs of those involved, such as health, safety, environment, suitability, dietary needs and risk assessments should be made first\*