



Gentlecare™

The philosophy of Gentlecare™ is that every person with dementia is a unique and special human being. People with dementia need people, programs and physical space to be sensitive and supportive, instead of challenging their dementia-related dysfunction. Gentlecare™ introduces the notion of compensating for the deficits of dementia by modifying the approach of people, programs and physical space to support the individual's values, strengths, desires and needs.

Dementia refers to over 70 diseases that cause symptoms resulting in a progressive deterioration of brain cells, particularly those responsible for thinking and memory. The cause is often unknown, and in most cases a cure is not available. Dementias, particularly Alzheimer Disease, result in dysfunction in all aspects of daily living and interpersonal relationships. Unfortunately, many people believe that when residents with dementia enter a long-term care home, professional caregivers need to take over. This leads to unnecessary distance and the severing of important relationships with family and friends. This can cause emotional and psychological anguish and frustration for the person with dementia. Toronto Long-Term Care Homes & Services advocates and promotes partnership with families to provide effective care.

We're working in the Residents' Home

Each interaction requires a consistent approach that enhances the individual's self-esteem and promotes trust and security. The care team embraces the attitude and philosophy that they are working in the residents' "home." For example, care team members engage in conversation with the residents, ask for their opinions and respect their moods. Public address announcements are minimized, as are any sudden, loud or intrusive noises that will frighten or disorient. Residents are allowed to wake up naturally and enjoy a "continental" breakfast if they prefer one.

Physical Space

The physical environment needs to be simple and home-like, with therapeutic design features that can help to enhance functioning and reduce fear, agitation and aggression. Examples of these design features include de-institutionalized washrooms, directional cueing, small groupings for social interaction and avoidance of excess noise and distracting patterns or glare to reduce confusion.

Programs

Programs are designed to be an integral part of daily life and to focus on self-care, communication, intimacy, relaxation, stress reduction, competency and former life roles.

Other Gentlecare™ approaches include:

- indoor/outdoor safe walking paths
- life-panels to provide insight into the person before the disease
- soothing sounds with tactile opportunities
- “normalized” activities such as tea towels to fold, brooms to sweep and dust cloths
- hand and foot massage for relaxation with touch.

Benefits of Gentlecare™

There are many benefits to the Gentlecare™ model. They include:

- reduction in aggressive episodes
- improved level of functioning
- better self-esteem
- improved participation in self-care
- increased spontaneous socialization and communication
- less wandering
- reduced incontinence
- increased family involvement.

What can the family do?

The family of residents with Alzheimer Disease plays an integral role in the care of their loved one. Do not take the changes in the resident personally. Childlike behaviour is part of the disease, which also causes people to lose their inhibitions. Continue to be involved in the daily care of the resident.

Help us understand the resident before the disease, including what they value and desire for quality of life. Use appropriate touch in your communication whenever possible, as persons with dementia are often isolated physically. Check at the nursing station to find out how care has been managed on any particular day to meet the unique needs of the individual resident. Let someone on the care team know right away if you are concerned about anything.

Just for Families is a series of information brochures created to provide important information for family members of residents living in Toronto Long-Term Care Homes and Services. We believe that family members are an important part of our care team, and that by understanding aging, medical concerns and other issues affecting the residents, family members can work with us to ensure their family member receives the highest quality of care at all times.

For more information about Gentlecare visit www.gentlecare.com