

Group activity for people with dementia

**GETTING OUT AND HAVING
SOME FUN**



Earlier research

- Activity is **important** for people living with dementia

e.g. leisure pastimes, household chores, social and work-related activity

- It provides enjoyment and a sense of purpose and belonging, and helps maintain identity

Phinney, A., Chaudhury, H. & O'Connor, D. (2007) Doing everything I can: the meaning of activity for people with dementia. *Aging and Mental Health*, 11, 384-393.

What is meaningful activity for people with dementia and how can it be best supported ?

Leisure Connections

- Leisure Connections was developed as a social recreation program for people with mild to moderate dementia

Leisure Connections

“practical, fun, and promises to encourage, motivate and educate the participants to discover a better quality of life.

The focus is to increase social interaction, share laughs, enjoy meals together, and develop new friendships.”

What did we want to know?

- ⦿ What were the important features of the program for the participants?
- ⦿ What were participants' thoughts and feelings about their involvement?
- ⦿ How did participants change over time?

What did we do?

- Participant observation (*40+ hours*)
- Conversational interviews (*10 interviews, 15-30 min*)
- Thematic analysis of field notes and interview transcripts

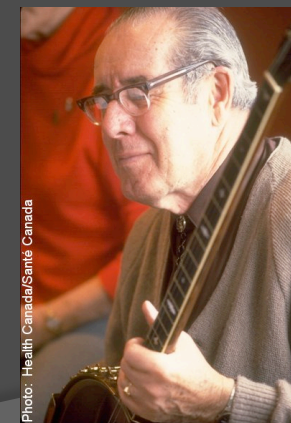
Group description

- Eleven members
 - 6 men and 5 women
 - ages 63-84 years
 - diagnosed with dementia (mostly AD)
 - living at home alone or with family.
- Two recreation staff and two community volunteers



Group description

- Met twice a week for 3-4 hours at a local senior community centre
- Activities included casual conversation, shared meals, lots of fun and games...



What did we find?

- ◎ Participants were very **positive** about their experiences in group, focusing on their feelings of **connection** and **enjoyment**.
- ◎ We identified 7 themes...

Findings

- ◎ It is a very close group with strong emotional ties.



Everybody gets along really, really well

Findings

- It is a happy upbeat atmosphere with lots of jokes and laughter.



Photo: Health Canada/Santé Canada

They have more fun than anything

Findings

- People share the common experience of having memory problems.



We're all Old-timers and we all know what that means

Findings

- ◎ It's a “low pressure” environment.



You can just be yourself

Findings

- ◎ Each person is a valued contributor to the group.



You feel like you're wanted

Findings

- ◎ People experience many encouraging changes.



They start coming alive

Findings

- ◎ It is easier to consider next steps.



This group is kind of like a stepping-stone

Conclusions

- ⦿ Social recreation can fill an important gap in services for this growing population
- ⦿ Participants benefit most when the group is **self-directed** and focused on having **fun**
- ⦿ People with dementia have a unique perspective as service users – it pays to ask!



Thank you...

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