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

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.

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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