

Scenario: Origami Swan Task

People with dementia often experience communication and comprehension deficits which lead to difficulties when carrying out different tasks – many of which usually requiring the completion of an ordered sequence of steps (e.g., making a cup of tea, getting dressed). Additionally, persons with dementia may also experience impairments to their vision and to their hearing – contributing greatly to the difficulty associated with both verbal and written instructions.



Aims

The aim of this training scenario is to simulate the experience of carrying out a sequenced task (making an origami swan) when instructions are confusing and incoherent – demonstrating the difficulty of undertaking tasks with cognitive/sensory impairments.



Learning Objectives

- Increase awareness of the difficulties a person with dementia may experience in following instructions/directions
- Nurture people's empathy for the frustration/irritation that can arise when a person is unable to carry out a sequential task.



When to use this scenario

This training scenario is suitable for an introductory course. It is informal and would serve well as an icebreaker task for groups of people who are unknown to each other. It is best suited to training surrounding early-stage dementia; although it is relevant to all stages. It is an interactive form of training and therefore cannot be conducted in an online training setting.

Equipment



- Square pieces of paper (1 per participant)
- Instruction Pages (6 variations)
 - Clear instructions
 - Instructions in the incorrect order
 - Written-only instructions (words without pictures)
 - Difficult-to-read instructions (very small print)
 - Nonsensical instructions
 - Instructions read to participants (page not provided to the group)

Downloadable supporting materials



- Slide show
- Evaluation form
- Origami instructions handout

Facilitation Instructions

Setting up:

- If square pieces of paper are not readily available, A4 pages should be cut to size prior to beginning this scenario.
- Print out multiple copies of each set of instructions - one per person.



Briefing:

Introduce the task with the following:

- *“For this training scenario, we will all be making something out of paper. You will be split into groups, but you will all be doing the same thing. You can communicate with your group, but you can't speak with anyone outside of your group. The first team to have all their members complete the task will win”.*

Activity Instructions

1. Introduce the task, conveying the points included in the briefing section above.
2. Split the participants into 6 groups - each group will receive a different set of origami instructions.
3. Pass out the paper squares, one to each participant, instructing them not to do anything with the paper yet.
4. Pass out the instruction pages, so each member has a copy and ask them not to read the page yet.
5. Leave one group without an instruction page. You will read the instructions to this group.
6. Ensure that each group has a different set of instructions, or that there is as little overlap as possible.
7. Remind participants not to communicate with other teams; instruct them to turn over the instructions and begin.
8. When dictating the instructions, ensure that you are speaking at a relatively low volume so that only this group can hear you.
9. Do not read clearly. The room may be noisy, and the group may lose track of the instructions. This is desirable. You may act frustrated with them and rush them; possibly, take the origami from them and do the step you are trying to instruct.
10. Once one team has a complete swan for each of its members, this team has won and you can finish up the task.
11. Ask each team to present their swans to the room and explain to everyone the type of instructions they received.



15-20 minutes

Group Reflection / Discussion



- Following the activity, take some time to reflect on individuals' experiences.
- Possibly compare the origami swans between groups and explain the type of instructions they received.
- Ask the group to describe the thoughts and emotions they felt when making the swan - and when they noticed the progress of other groups.
- Discuss the day-to-day implications of experiencing difficulty completing sequenced tasks/following instructions



Helpful Tips

- Laminating the instruction pages would ensure they last longer and show fewer signs of wear

Additional Resources



Advice for communicating with a person with dementia:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/communication-and-dementia/>
- https://www.dementia.org.au/sites/default/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-CaringForSomeone01-Communication_english.pdf
- <https://www.understandtogether.ie/Get-involved/Community-activation/Understanding%20changes%20in%20behaviour.pdf>