

Scenario: Social Interaction

People with dementia may have difficulty keeping up with a conversation, which can result in them saying things that don't apply to what is being discussed, or answering questions with inappropriate responses.

This scenario will teach participants the importance of adapting communication styles when interacting with people with dementia

Aims



To simulate how social interactions can be perceived differently for people with dementia to engage in.

This scenario also aims to educate participants about how sensory changes (e.g., hearing and vision changes) can impact a person's ability to communicate and interact socially.

Learning Objectives



- To learn how everyday conversations should be adapted and tailored to include people with dementia.
- To understand that sensory limitations can make it challenging for people with dementia to keep up in conversations.
- To appreciate how communication styles may be altered to make social interactions more accessible for people with dementia.

When to use this scenario



Communication difficulties are not specific to any stage or type of dementia, but they do tend to get worse as the dementia progresses. This scenario should ideally be run in the introductory parts of the course as social interactions are an important part of living well with dementia.



Equipment

- Roleplay description and script handout
- Headphones connected to a mobile phone
- Cafe noise audio clip



Downloadable supporting materials

- Presentation slide show
- Communication information sheet
- Hearing loss simulator information sheets
- Evaluation form



Helpful Tips

- The role play exercise can be run with any number of participants and the scripts can be changed to make it more or less difficult.

Facilitation Instructions

Setting up:

Set up the room as if it is a social setting, with 3 - 4 chairs in a circle. Assign participants as participant 1 (P1), participant 2 (P2), participant 3 (P3), or participant 4 (P4; optional)

Designate a role to each of the participants and give them the role description handout that relates to their assigned role:

- P1 - person with dementia
- P2 - friend of the person with dementia
- P3 - friend of the person with dementia
- P4 - observer (optional)



Send the cafe audio file to the mobile phone of P1, who will listen to this on their phone using headphones during the activity.

Briefing:

Tell the participants:

- *"You are a group of people including a person with dementia and their friends."*
- *"You have just met up in a café after not seeing each other for some time. You all have some stories to tell and you are looking forward to catching up."*



20 minutes

Activity Instructions



- Distribute role descriptions and scripts appropriately to participants, i.e., role description for P1 to the participant playing the person with dementia.
- These handouts are available separately to download.
- Ask P1 (person with dementia) to wear headphones playing the cafe noise audio clip throughout the scenario.
- Make sure that the sound of the cafe noise audio clip is at a level whereby the person can just about make out what the other people in their group are saying.
- Ask the participant playing the person with dementia to leave the room while the other participants familiarise themselves with their roles and script. It is not necessary to stick strictly to the sample script which is to be used as a guide. Participants may also wish to make up their own stories or conversation
- Make sure P1 does not see the roleplay script as after the activity you will ask them to relay the information they can remember from the conversation back to the people in their group.

Group Reflection / Discussion

- First, ask the participant who played the person with dementia (P1) if they can recall the story that was told by the other participants?

Then, have a general discussion about:

- What did the participants notice and learn about social interaction and communication in this scenario?
- How each of the participants felt in the roles they played?
- For P1, did you notice anything different from exercise 1 and exercise 2?
 - If so, what were these differences?
- Was one exercise more difficult than the other?
- Did you come to a better understanding of how you or another person felt?
- For P2 and P3, what do you think you would have done differently or how would you face a situation like this the next time?



Additional Resources

Social Interaction & Dementia

- <https://www.dementiacarecentral.com/caregiverinfo/handsoncare/socialization/>

Communicating & Dementia

- <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/symptoms-and-diagnosis/symptoms/communicating-and-dementia>

