

## **Lessening the Impact of Dementia – courses for family carers**

Dementia can bring changes to the brain, body and behaviour, but our courses focus on its effects on the person inside. Rather than fighting against it as a disease, we work positively with it as a disability. This reduces its impact on the person, so behaviour becomes less of an issue.

We began offering interactive training via online meetings in 2020. Even carers prevented from joining in face-to-face events by their caring role, location or even lockdown could attend, and their feedback was overwhelmingly positive. We now deliver courses online, with one face-to-face course in a different part of Wokingham borough each term.

We run 8 weekly interactive sessions for about 6 trainees. The training is free of charge, but we ask carers to purchase our booklet @£5. Each session includes a short presentation, with time for Q&A and discussion. During the course participants gain a better understanding of what the dementia is doing to the person they support, and how to lessen its impact on them. Each week we focus on a different aspect of our approach; trainees can try out techniques between sessions and discuss the outcome the following week. Carers gradually deepen their understanding of dementia, develop their skills and build mutually supportive relationships within the group. After completing the course, we invite participants to join our online community of family carers using this approach for ongoing discussion and support.

### **Topics covered in each 75-minute interactive session:**

1. **Introduction to Understanding Dementia**
  - what’s different about this approach, and how it can lessen the impact of dementia
2. **Well-being in dementia**
  - its importance, why it is so vulnerable in dementia, and how to support it
3. **Questions**
  - why they can be unhelpful in dementia, and how to find better ways to support choice
4. **Being a buddy**
  - how to get alongside the people you care for, and build better relationships
5. **Contradiction and confrontation**
  - why they are best avoided, and how to do that without getting tangled up in lies
6. **Listening and talking skills**
  - what to listen out for, what we can learn, and how to deal with repetitive questions
7. **The hazards of ‘parenting’ our elders**
  - why role reversal can cause problems, and how to address ‘difficult’ behaviour
8. **Where do we go from here?**
  - how planning ahead to avoid a crisis can delay the need for full-time care

We have interactive online training courses for health and care professionals too - see our website for details. When care is shared among a team of people trained in this approach, it has a more seamless and unobtrusive feel to the person at its centre.