

## **Lessening the Impact of Dementia - courses for health and care professionals**

Dementia training often has a biomedical focus on changes in the brain, body and behaviour. Our training is different: rather than focusing on deficits or fighting dementia as a disease, we work positively with the condition as a disability. This reduces its impact on the person, so that behaviour becomes less of an issue.

This training is suitable for anyone working in health or care settings, especially those who regularly encounter people living with dementia. Anyone who regularly encounters people with dementia in their role, or who supervises, mentors or manages others who do, at any level in any health, care or social setting, will benefit from this course. No previous training is needed to understand this course, and whatever dementia courses they have done in the past, delegates will learn something new.

Our course for professionals consists of 9 weekly interactive online sessions. Each session includes a short presentation using real-life examples, with time for questions and discussion. The course improves delegates' understanding of how dementia affects the person, with skills to:

- lessen the impact of dementia on the person and their family
- de-escalate distressed behaviour
- avoid inadvertently triggering distress.

### **Topics covered in each 60-minute interactive session:**

1. **Introduction to Understanding Dementia**  
– what's different about this approach, and how it can lessen the impact of dementia
2. **Types of dementia and related conditions**  
– how they differ, and what they have in common
3. **Well-being in dementia**  
– its importance, its extra vulnerability in dementia, and how to support it
4. **Questions**  
– why they can be unhelpful in dementia, and how to find better ways to support choice
5. **Being a buddy**  
– how to get alongside the people you care for, and build better relationships
6. **Contradiction and confrontation**  
– why we should avoid them, and how to do that without getting tangled up in lies
7. **Listening and talking skills**  
– what to listen out for, what we can learn, and how to deal with repetitive questions
8. **The hazards of 'parenting' our elders**  
– why role reversal can cause problems, and how to address 'difficult' behaviour
9. **Counterintuitive strategies for managing risk, professional boundaries etc**  
– how using this approach can make difficult situations easier to manage

This training is very cost-effective and includes a hard copy of the booklet 'Understanding Dementia and Lessening its Impact', with electronic handouts after each session and CPD certificate on completion. During the course, reflective homework completed online helps to embed the training as you apply the principles of this approach to the trainee's own workplace and caseload. After

completing the course, we invite delegates to join our online community of professionals using this approach, for ongoing discussion and support.

When a whole team is trained in the same approach, clients can experience seamless and unobtrusive care, especially if family members also take our free course for family carers.

Below are some examples of feedback from health and care professionals:

*“Attending the course that Understanding Dementia runs was an absolute game changer for me! ... It taught me to follow my human instincts and focus on the feelings of the with people with dementia that I support – that their feelings should be my number one priority. And in this way, I can maintain a connection with them and always leave them feeling content and happy... [The course] makes logical, practical sense...and is engaging and emotive. I think everyone should have to do it!”*

**Beth, personal support assistant, 2021**

*“I have attended a number of courses on dementia, but this one has definitely altered my practice. Each one-hour session introduced one new concept. I gradually changed how I interacted with clients. I now focus on feelings, not facts. I ask fewer questions. Since then, the people I support have experienced fewer incidents of aggression, agitation or distress.”*

**Marta, occupational therapist, 2021**

*“Out of all the dementia courses I have done, this was by far the best and most thought provoking. It has allowed me to think differently and have a greater understanding of how to interact with residents... I think everyone working with those living with dementia should enrol on this course.”*

**Stacey, care home team leader, 2022**

*“I have taken away so much knowledge about dementia, and it has really changed my outlook on how dementia patients feel on a daily basis. I understand how to better communicate with them, which allows me to “become a buddy”, and then to facilitate my assessments in a stress-free manner. [The course] was highly beneficial and I will be putting everything I have learned into my practice. It has changed the way in which I can approach dementia patients, and how to best use my new knowledge about dementia to then benefit my practice. The course was excellent, and I would definitely recommend.”*

**Toni, occupational therapist, 2023**

*“For me the best thing was hearing real life shared experiences as this is much more relatable than just learned text book information. The stories shared by the trainers are all real so it makes it much easier to understand their impact. Also being able to share a situation you are unsure of how to handle and hearing a different approach/perspective is hugely beneficial...It’s already changed the way I will talk to volunteers about visiting someone with dementia...I found the course extremely helpful and wouldn’t hesitate to recommend to others.”*

**Karan, assessor for befriending charity, 2024**