**Meeting the Psychological Needs of People with Dementia**

Five major psychological needs have been identified that people with dementia have.

These needs are often in danger of not being met in formal settings; the psychological needs include comfort, identity, attachment, occupation and inclusion

**Comfort**

Comfort is about the provision of tenderness, closeness and soothing. It promotes security and decreases anxiety, it helps people relax. Comfort can be provided through physical touch, or through comforting words or gestures. Comfort also includes physical comfort with one’s body.

Expressions of warmth, holding and a relaxed pace will help people achieve their need for comfort.

A lack of comfort will be experienced by those who are in pain, or who feel physically ill or unwell, or who are sitting or lying in an unpleasant place.

Intimidation, withholding and outpacing will undermine the need for comfort being met.

**Identity**

Identity relates to knowing who one is and to having a sense of continuity with the past. It is also about having a life-story that is held and maintained, either by the person with dementia, or for them by others. Others know about you, they know who you are and they hold you in esteem.

Identity is supported by respect, acceptance and celebration.

Identity can be undermined particularly by infantilisation, labeling, and disparagement.

**Attachment**

Attachment relates to bonding, connection, nurture, trust and relationship. It also relates to security in relationships, and feeling that one has trusted others to whom you can turn in times of trouble or need. When people are anxious the need to feel attached to someone or something familiar often increases to a significant degree.

Attachment needs can be supported by acknowledgement, genuineness and validation.

Attachment can be undermined by accusation, treachery and invalidation.

**Occupation**

Occupation relates to being involved in activity in a way that is personally meaningful. It also relates to having a sense of agency, which is about feeling one has control over the world and can make things happen. It is about feeling that you can have an effect and impact on what is done and how.

Occupation is supported by empowering, enabling, facilitating and collaborative approach.

Occupation is undermined by disempowerment, disruption, imposition and objectification.

**Inclusion**

Inclusion is about bringing or being brought into the social world, either physically or verbally. It relates to facilitating engagement where there would otherwise be none, and making a person feel they are part of the group, and are welcomed and accepted.

Recognising people’s worth, including them in discussions and activities emphasising a sense of belonging and having fun together all support the need for people to feel included.

Stigmatising, ignoring, banishment and mockery undermine the need for inclusion being met.