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The lighter side of caring for a person with dementia
Introduction: The lighter side of caring for a person with dementia

- Background
- Research
- Findings
- Future projects
“Play therapy is founded on a number of theoretical models whereby the training play therapist utilises the power of play, within a therapeutic relationship, to relieve suffering, prevent or resolve emotional and behavioural difficulties and to achieve optimal growth and development of children (or older individuals)”

APPTA 2012
“Humanistic Expressions: Caring for a person with dementia”

- Royal Hobart Hospital Research Foundation
- Focus on aging in North-West Tasmanian communities
Qualitative ethnographic study

- Seven participants interviewed
- Four dyads interviewed together
- Field observations
- Five council districts in North West Tasmania
Findings

Data were rich and included some random themes included

- Anger, Abuse, Attitude and Acceptance,
- The car, Communication and Creativity
- Burden of care – but he is no burden, Empathy
- Diagnosis, Despair, Distrust, Depression, Dignity
- Pets, Respite, Relationships, Repetition, Repetition, Repetition, Repetition and Repetition
- Sadness, Safety, Security and Sex
- Love, Mirrors, Travel, and a Ride on lawn mower
Reflections
Humour and Laughter
“[Art therapist] used to come every week for an hour, so she got him back into his painting, and he’s done some lovely paintings....And he done one for ...because he loves penguins”
Don’t ask questions

- “...the worse thing that you can do for anyone in PWD’s state, is to ask them a question.” P4

- “Oh God ... aren’t you sick of this rain?, we’ve had so much rain!” P4

- “If you have enough information to ask a question – you have enough information to make a statement” Landreth 2011
Love stories

- “You know, you really need to want, try to keep that closeness as much as you can.” P4

- “One never goes to bed without the other. I’m always the leader, when I decide it’s time to go to bed, I just up and I don’t even have to speak and I walk in and he’s behind me.” P3
“He’s a better man now, than the man I married. Even though he drives me to despair with, well the Dementia drives me to despair, he doesn’t.” P1
“I wish some times I could just fly in PWD’s mind when she tries to tell me, really to see where she is at, you know and but I can figure out with just one word here and another there, I can get an idea what, where she is living.”

“She still is beautiful”
Communicating - a different level
Quoting P1 Leonard Cohen song – “anthem”

“There is a crack, a crack in everything...
That's how the light gets in”.
Family caregivers often facilitated respectful, humanistic expressions which are also seen in play therapy and includes values such as empathy, integrity, respect, courage and compassion.
Thank you

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