



YOUNG-D

Emotions and feelings in young onset dementia

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Emotions and feelings in people with young onset dementia

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Emotions and feelings in people with young onset dementia

Lecture

Introduction

Vandekerckhove and Wang (2017) found that unexpressed emotions or feelings can lead to stress and sleep problems in the general population. Therefore, it is important to be aware of experienced emotions and feelings to promote emotional regulation. Mindfulness (Goyal et al., 2014; Green and Kinchen, 2021; Janssen et al., 2018) and breathing techniques (Hamasaki et al., 2021; Naik et al., 2018; Tavoian et al., 2023) have been shown to be effective in experiencing feelings in the present moment without judgement or the urge to change them. Additionally, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) are evidence-based methods for exploring ideas and beliefs about feelings and emotions. These therapies can aid in cognitive restructuring, which can contribute to emotional regulation (Chung et al., 2018; Geiger-Brown et al., 2015; Koffel et al., 2014; Salari et al., 2020).

Emotions: role and function

Emotions are complex psychological and physiological responses that arise in reaction to internal or external stimuli. Basic emotions are happiness, sadness, anger and fear. Besides these basic emotions, there is a wide range of other feelings. People experience emotions as a result of a combination of biological, cognitive, and environmental factors. Strong emotions may also be caused by unmet needs.

Emotions:

- have served adaptive functions
- help individuals navigate in their environment
- facilitate decisions that enhance survival and well-being
- serve as social signals and help conveying information to others
- influence social interactions
- play a crucial role in shaping human behaviour, cognition, and interpersonal relationships, influencing everything from decision-making to memory formation

- are a fundamental aspect of human experience, contributing to our understanding of ourselves and the world around us

Keeping emotions bottled up can lead to stress and troubled sleeping. It's important to be aware of how you feel, as this awareness can help you manage your emotions better. Recognizing and acknowledging one's emotions is crucial, as this awareness enables more effective emotional management.

For people with Young Onset Dementia, this awareness is especially important as they may experience a range of emotions differently. Providing support, adapted to their unique emotional needs, can greatly enhance their quality of life.

Techniques such as mindfulness, breathing, and music therapy can help individuals with Young Onset Dementia to connect with and express their emotions more effectively.

Additionally, creating a supportive environment where they feel understood and validated can play a significant role in promoting emotional well-being in people with Young Onset Dementia.

The iceberg as a metaphor



The iceberg serves as a powerful metaphor for emotions.

Above the waterline, only the tip of the iceberg is visible, while the vast majority remains hidden beneath the surface.

When encountering behaviour that you don't understand, it becomes crucial to find out what the individual is truly trying to say or what the individual requires. This involves examining, contemplating, and probing beneath the surface to uncover the underlying needs, feelings, and emotions.

Workshop

Reading emotions

- **Description:** the participants look at different pictures of people/emojis and talk about what emotions/feelings they represent according to them. This way we get to know what kind of feeling they think of when they see certain pictures. That way we learn more about how they interpret the feelings of other people before they talk about how they feel themselves
- **Goal:** getting to know how the participants recognize different emotions. Getting comfortable with talking about emotions
- **Method:** present pieces of paper with emojis or pictures with real faces on the table. The participant chooses a picture and tells what kind of feeling they see. Let them do it without correcting them but only be open and curious about how they interpret them. There is no true or false answer
 - Examples of questions for the emotion cards
 - *Do you recognize this emotion?*
 - *Have you felt like this lately?*
 - *What sensations do you experience in your thoughts or body when you feel this emotion?*
 - *What helps you when you feel this emotion?*
 - *Is there someone you can talk to when you experience this emotion? •*
- **Tools:** pictures of people/emoji, do this game in small groups with a maximum of four people. During the session it is not necessary to know if something is true or not – just focus on the feelings

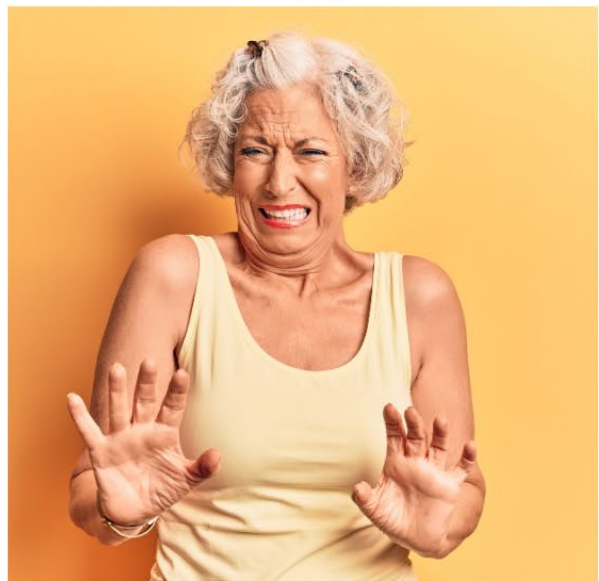


Figure: cards with emotions

Listening to music



- **Description:** use music as a tool to connect with the emotions of the participant
- **Goal:** to connect with their own emotions and feelings and facilitate talking about emotions
- **Method:** ask participants for a song that touches/moves them. Something that makes them happy, something they listen to when they are sad. Also give people time to think about this (e.g. give the instructions to reflect on this after a session)
- **Tools:** music box and audio (e.g. YouTube)

Talking jar



- **Description:** using prepared questions in an introspective way to learn to talk about emotions. By using a jar of questions on a piece of paper you make it less personally and more randomly
- **Goal:** talking together about emotions that people experience
- **Method:** make cards with different questions about emotions. Put the cards in a jar or place them upside down on the table. All participants are invited to take a card and read it out loud. The question is not specific to the person reading it, but to the whole group. Come up with examples yourself if you notice that people are having trouble with the question. If the participant is not comfortable with the question, he/she can take another one. Sample questions:
 - *How are you feeling today?*
 - *Can you describe what happiness means to you?*
 - *Can you describe what grief means to you?*
 - *Can you describe what being angry means to you?*
 - *Can you describe what being anxious means to you?*
 - *How would you like to feel?*
 - *Is there someone you can talk to when you're feeling happy, sad, angry, or anxious?*
 - *Which emotions do you know well? And do you share them as well?*
 - *Do you talk about your emotions and feelings?*
 - *What emotions are you hiding or don't you like to feel?*
 - *What emotions did you talk about in the past?*
 - *What are you bummed about, but you don't say?*
 - *What do you feel and don't express?*

- **Tools:** the trainer starts a conversation by using prepared questions from the toolbox. Feel free to add follow-up questions to stimulate the conversation. People are free to make their own questions

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