

RELATIONAL CARING

Key Principles:

- Compassionate relationships are at the core of human wellness
- Through relationships human beings learn and grow
- Relational caring involves:
 - connection
 - interdependence
 - collectivity and collaboration
- Relationships are important for nurturing a sense of:
 - safety and security
 - belonging
 - purpose and meaning
 - continuity
 - achievement
 - significance
- Relationships exist within larger, intricate, dynamic webs of connections and are influenced by other social, cultural and environmental relationships



Image created by Dr. Lisa Meschino and the members of the John Noble Home LEAD Program

Relational Caring

- is an on-going process of building a person's capacity to:
 - support another person in their growth and well-being
 - nurture 'well' relationships and effect change in relationships when needed
- it involves:
 - being attentive to oneself, to others, and relationships
 - showing empathy and curiosity by being emotionally present, moved by, and interested in others
 - being alert to the potential consequences of our feelings and actions with others
 - being open to the role we play in relationships and knowing that learning and change flows both ways
 - being real, honest, and open with others in a respectful and compassionate way
 - experiencing vulnerability as a place of potential growth rather than danger
 - respecting others power to live and have meaningful relationships
 - removing barriers in order to facilitate freedom, self-expression, and strong compassionate relationships

Examples of Ways to Nurture Relational Caring

Relational Caring through Voice and Spoken Language

- before we begin, explaining what we are doing and why
- simplifying language used and tasks
- being gentle/using a calm voice and manner
- listening carefully and repeating words or phrases the person has used
- being attuned to the words we use, thinking about how words might be received and removing all stigmatizing words

Relational Caring through Body Language

- being attuned to what our body language might be communicating
- recognizing how others express themselves and share information through their bodies

- approaching the person from the front
- relating at the person's eye level
- showing affection and using a compassionate and calming touch
- modelling/showing what we would like the person to do

Relational Caring through Reciprocity

- understanding how we influence each other
- speaking and moving with an awareness of the possible consequences of our feelings and actions for other people
- building relationships grounded in trust, patience, compassion, and respect
- being responsive to others
- assisting the person in making their own decisions
- asking the person about his/her life and sharing aspects of your life with others
- providing meaningful experiences/interactions so the person can continue to feel useful and valued
- asking for help and support from others
- using collaborative decision-making and problem-solving
- being aware of our own needs as well as the needs of others

Relational Caring through Being Present with others

- believing that the person is "still there" and continues to have abilities and the capacity to be in relationship and communicate in meaningful ways
- respecting and being able to "go with" the person's realities
- moving with the person's rhythms, slowing down
- being flexible in routines and ways of living
- knowing and respecting individual preferences, biographies, and histories
- being emotionally present, which involves being with, being responsive, and the sharing of emotions and feelings (e.g., joy, happiness, loneliness, fear, sadness, powerlessness, anger, boredom, etc.)
- being attuned to all the factors that can shape experiences and expressions of those experiences including how the person might be experiencing their bodies and the broader social and physical environments

Questions to Reflect On

*Think of a time when you were experiencing an engaging meaningful relationship.
What helps you to be in relation with others?*

*Think of a time when you were not connected in relationship.
What got in the way?*

Sources

- Jordan, J., Walker, M., & Hartling, L. (2004). *The complexity of connection: Writings from the Stone Center's Jean Baker Miller Training Institute*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Nolan, M.R., Lundh, U., Grant, G., & Keady, J. (2003). *Partnerships in family care*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Nolan, M., Ryan, T., Enderby, P., & Reid, D. (2002). Towards a more inclusive vision of dementia care practice and research. *Dementia*, 1(2), 193-211.