THE PURPOSE OF PURPOSE

CARERS' SUPPORT SERVICE

Purpose gives us a sense of direction and makes us feel wanted, needed and important.

It brings meaning to our existence. It helps reassure us that we are doing something worthwhile or relevant and that we... are relevant.

Our purpose does not have to be big to create a positive impact on our well-being. It can be something as simple as a job of drying the pots. Our purpose is unique to us, but it should be something meaningful.

Everyone, regardless of age, education, professional background, or health status, needs a purpose and deserves to find and serve a purpose. This meaningful activity is important to help us all maintain a good quality of life.

People living with dementia often begin to withdraw from activities and social interactions which they previously enjoyed. This can be for a number of reasons.
It can be difficult to see the person you care for disengage from the world around them.

Meaningful activity is important to help us all maintain a good quality of life, whether we are living with dementia or not.

However, it is particularly important for people with dementia as it:

<u>Helps maintain skills and independence</u>
If someone is not using a muscle or a skill, it becomes easier for them to lose that skill. Many of our tasks and movements come from muscle memory or from using those muscles. It can be a case of use it, or lose it.

<u>Contributes to maintaining cognitive function</u>
Similar to muscle use, keeping the brain active with conversations, thinking, making use of recall, both short term and long term keeps the mind active, and the synapses (the brain connections) firing.

<u>Helps build and preserve self-esteem and self-confidence</u>
Encouraging someone to still try make decisions and have a say in their own life promotes them to have autonomy over themselves and still know that they are valued and have a say over their life.

Imagine if someone made every decision for you and you couldn't input anything.

Lets look at what purposeful tasks can be done.

We can separate our time into three sections these could classed as "Work", "Self Care" and "Leisure".

All of these sections involve looking at what they person living with dementia can do, as opposed to looking at what their limitations may be. It is a lot easier for us to adapt ourselves and the way things are done than staying rigid just because that is the way its always been done. Or doing it yourself is quicker and easier.

However, safety is always the first priority.

We do not encourage you to put them, you or anyone else in danger!



The whole idea is to look at what they can do and find a way to help them partake, even if they are initially hesitant making adaptions both practically and with own expectations.

Work/chores

Perhaps the person with dementia used to always make the cup of tea.

How can this be adapted so that they still can?
Would marking the kitchen cupboards with labels help?

What about putting the ingredients to where the person looks, rather than where they look best?

What about a 'one-cup kettle'?

Does it matter in the long run if they don't add two sugars to your tea, or make coffee rather than tea?

They tried and they somewhat succeeded!

Perhaps the person with dementia can dust, dry up, or perhaps collect the post from the front door?

Self Care

Often times with dementia as a diagnosis, Carers from a place of kindness start taking over. Perhaps your loved one can still brush their own hair, or their own teeth, but perhaps they don't know where to start.

Sometimes passing them the item removes steps and makes the task easier. For example perhaps not being able to find the toothbrush stops the whole process. But if they have it in their hand that hurdle is removed.

The person with dementia can be supported still to make decisions for themselves. Rather than asking them an open question of what they might like in their sandwich and running through many options, perhaps getting the cheese and the ham out of the fridge and showing them the choices. Decisions, even with limited options can promote self-advocacy.

"Would you like a cheese sandwich, or a ham sandwich today"

They can choose and if they can't vocalise their choice they can point to their chosen filling.

The same could then be done with a choice of mayonnaise, or mustard.

Leisure

What can they can do?

Maybe they can no longer follow a conversation, or be the main attraction in the room, but they still may enjoy sitting with the group. Or, they might enjoy sitting with just one person even if it is in comfortable companionship silence.

Historically they may have had the smartest looking garden in the street. But perhaps they can no longer garden the way they used to. But if they can still push the lawn mower, they could. It might not have the perfect stripes, or bits may be missed and left long, but they can still get enjoyment from the task.

They still tried and they still succeeded.



And.... Rest

Rest is just as important as being busy. Even top athletes have rest days!

Living with dementia takes up a lot of brain power.

Remembering, staying on task, thinking, recalling, holding information, working out what's going on, etc, all takes a lot of energy.



Being Grateful

Everyone loves to feel appreciated. When someone is thanked they walk a little taller, hold their head a little higher.

For example dusting, or passing you the pegs, or making that sandwich, even if it was without butter, or has been left uncut, remember to thank them.

Thank them for their help and express how much you appreciate their help.

Tell them how much you enjoyed that sandwich and that you have always liked the way they made them.