Creative Storytelling at the Forest Centre: Our experience of the TimeSlips™ method

Forest Centre

A purpose built 24 bed unit providing acute mental health assessment and treatment to older adults, including 8 specialist dementia beds.

Using a person-centred approach, treatment is provided for patients in the early stages of dementia to those with more complex needs, in preparation for discharge to their own home with support, or an appropriate care provider. Staff provide meaningful activities to promote the wellbeing of their patients.

A collaboration with the University of Northampton led to a trial of an innovative method of engaging with people with dementia: TimeSlips™.

TimeSlips™

TimeSlips™, devised by Anne Basting in 1998, is a storytelling method using photographic images as a way to create an imaginative story. Using a series of open questions, participants are encouraged to contribute to the development of a story evoked from the picture, rather than the pressure of using memory.

Outcomes

Patient benefits include:

- Taking pride in being part of the storytelling process
- Sharing stories with their visitors
- Being surprised at their own creativity
- Having feelings of ownership
- No longer being just a patient, but a co-author

Other benefits:

- It is seen by some as a highlight of the week
- Stories can be intelligent, humorous, reflective, creative, imaginative and include personal memories
- Stories include sight of the person behind the dementia
- Staff look forward to reading the latest story

I don’t wanna be a chicken!

‘...they are going to Jack’s Bar. When they get to Jack’s Bar it’ll be party time! The music will be Spanish music and they will have a drink. After the party he could roast chickens – or make chicken tikka – they should be grateful. Does he have a family? There is one missing if he’s roasted one! The family are not happy they roasted a chicken, she laughs – she’ll laugh every time she sees a chicken. We don’t want to be a chicken! Is it the end of the story – well it’s the end of one of the chickens!'