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"ON STAGE IN THE GOLDEN AGE: THEATRE FOR HEALTHY AGEING"

Module 6



lecompagniemalviste





Practical theatre activities that can be implemented by social and mental health professionals and cultural operators working with older people



Alzheimer's/dementia on the rise in the general population.

Indicated by the WHO as a global public health priority.

In the last 20 years new spaces have sprung up – psychosocial laboratories, Alzheimer's cafés, meeting centres, etc.

New approach not exclusively health-pharmacological that recognizes the role and impact of art and culture, including of course also theatre.





The clinical evidence of the relationship between culture and health is confirmed by studies and research.

Artistic interventions are considered non-invasive and are low-risk treatment options useful for complementing traditional biomedical treatments.

Arts can help provide multisectoral, holistic and integrated, person-centered care, addressing complex challenges for which there are no solutions in current healthcare.





Art and culture can:

- influence the social determinants of health;
- encourage health-promoting behaviours;
- help prevent disease, including improving well-being and reducing the impact of trauma or the risk of cognitive impairment;
- support care and care, including increasing our understanding of health and improving clinical skills;
- improve intergenerational bonding;
- support the growth and engagement of young people.



The quality of life and well-being of fragile people depends on the ability to place their state of health in a more comprehensive framework where art, theater, poetry, dance, music, play, etc. find space.

Art and culture become means and not just aesthetic acts

Investment in culture is useful for the development of personal and social skills, the promotion of active citizenship and social inclusion and cohesion, training, the creation of individual, group, organizational and social well-being and health.

Objectives:

- To promote dementia as a new season of life to be lived with dignity and in community;
- To improve the ability to empathize with the other;
- To learn to use non-verbal language with awareness;
 - To facilitate active listening;
- To grasp the points of fragility and strengths and enhance them.





Community Objectives:

- To spread a new culture of disease;
- To promote inclusion;
- To support the intergenerational meeting;
- To involve and activate synergies with other community actors.



Turin Health Forum 2013:

"Theatre is a form of communication, expression, meeting and participation."

"It promotes awareness, growth and empowerment of people, groups and communities using different types of artistic languages, creative processes and performance sleeps."

"It brings together, with balance, playful and festive, formative and cognitive stimulation aspects."



Theatre is ...

- ... a place where everyone, even without having a script, can say something;
- ... a space that welcomes everyone;
- ... a container of culture;
- ... an opportunity to get to know each other, create relationships and improve oneself;
- ... plurality, it is something that cannot be done alone but is done with and for others.





The theatre is based on four pillars:

- 1) rituality – rehearsals/repetition to find intensity;
- 2) the body;
- 3) representation;
- 4) participation with responsibility – feeling part of a group and feeling a feeling of belonging/responsibility towards that whole.

Theatre is not knowing by heart but remembering together. To be able to do this, it is necessary to learn a language that is able to reach the other, always being aware and convinced that we are all different, that we are unique pieces.





Teatro fragile – Maneggiare con cura *Fragile Theatre – Handle with care*



Alzheimer's disease is a community affair
Not only about health care system

People at the centre in a collective work

Collective work blurs the differences

Discover the most significant contributions of the individual



The center of the method is transformation:
transforming places of culture into places of care and
places of care in places of culture.

The most important thing is to create a setting that is
free from judgment, where people do what they can
and where, through trial and error,
new solutions to old problems can be found.

Theatre is not just culture.
Theatre is art and beauty, fundamental elements for the
care of the individual person.
Each of us has so much to give, it's up to us to listen.





The method *Teatro Fragile – Maneggiare con cura* has been developed and followed for 17 years and now is administered as a real practice



How important is the relationship between people to get out of their loneliness and isolation, to confront each other and to have a fixed appointment within a group

To awaken and strengthen a sense of belonging to a group

The theatrical act creates relationship

To transform a trauma into a plot – “*Un trauma in una trama*” in Italian

To promote a new culture of disease through representation



In the person with fragility, we find the ability to move air, that is, to create a new language that reaches the other, from one heart to another.

I, as a conductor, do not bring my own language but learn a new one.

The group together can create its own language, verbal or non-verbal.





Theatre workshop – once a week (at least) and open to everyone (caregivers, volunteers, young people, schools etc.)

Seniors become actors, authors, set designers, costume designers

Duration: one and a half hour

Tools: towels, tapes, suitcases, old phones etc.

Arouse the curiosity of the fragile person



Techniques from different artistic disciplines, (music
therapy and dance)

Movement is a fundamental component for people
with Alzheimer's

Reawaken that body memory that we all have

Pass from real life to theatre and vice versa, working
with who is there and with the resources that can offer





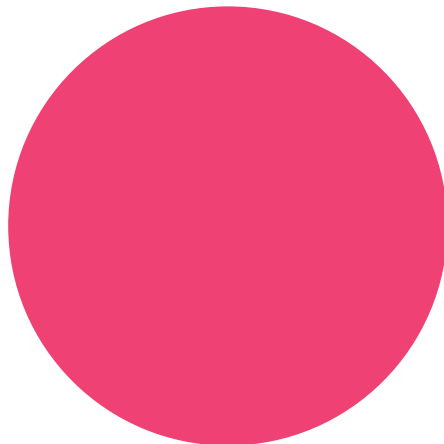
All these activities are very useful for the person with Alzheimer or dementia, but also for caregivers and families.

One lady's son asked us:

What are you doing to my mother? Every Monday night, when she comes home after the theatre workshop, she eats peacefully and then goes to sleep with a smile. and she sleeps all night. But what do you do to my mother?

We said: We don't know...but if you want to find it out, just get in the circle with us!

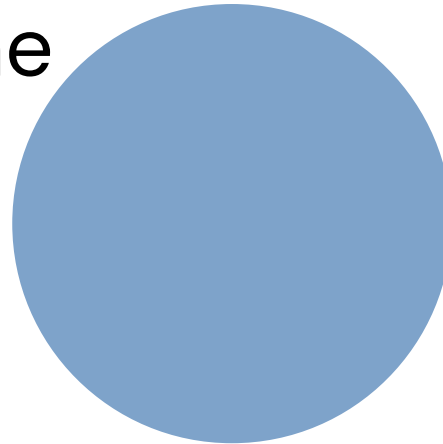
It's important that caregivers and families participate... they learn to see with new eyes!



We need new tools to dialogue with people with Alzheimer's, but also with caregivers and family members, who are the ones who suffer the most because they find themselves alone, without help and answers to their questions.

Burdensome care burden has repercussions on multiple aspects of life: work, economic, social, physical, psychological and emotional.

For these reasons, it is important that the caregiver also takes part in the proposed activities.



We need to ask ourselves the question: "***Who cares for people who care for others?***"

The participation of the caregiver in the theatre workshops:

- can bring out new awareness of what the person with Alzheimer's/dementia can still do;
- can restore a sense of satisfaction for the relationships that can still be established;
- diverts attention from the disease to focus instead on the emotions generated by the activities;
- increases social activities and allows it to create new links;
- offers the opportunity to share one's experience and problems with peers.

Before starting any activity, it is essential to get to know the group.

With the participants sitting or standing and arranged in a circle, the perfect shape where no one is excluded and everyone can look at each other, the conductors introduce themselves and ask those present to introduce themselves in turn.

This first step is important because it allows to test the verbal cognitive level and then set up the work by conveying it in the appropriate direction to grasp all the skills and resources.

The questions must be simple: name, surname, job, interests and passions, tell something about yourself.



Rules:

- Individual expression of each person is promoted;
 - Listen in silence;
 - Needs are agreed;
- Everyone does what they can and feel;
 - No judgment and no suggestions;
- Knowing how to wait and give things time to emerge and mature;
- Turn off the voices in your head that say "*What are you doing?*", "*You're too old to do these things*", "*You made a mistake*", "*I'm ashamed*" etc.
 - Allowing yourself to make mistakes
-Because good things are born from mistakes.



Theatrical activities in the workshop

Welcome and personal presentations — name, age, feelings etc

Introduce the person to your right/left — the operator asks everyone to introduce to the whole group the person on his right/left.

Presenting yourself with a gesture — The person will propose his gesture and then the rest of the group will imitate him.

What's the ball for you? — the operator then asks everyone to say what the ball is for him. After declaring it, the person has to pass it to his partner on his left/right while asking him "What is for you?"

Ball pass — The pass is made by making the ball a bounce.

The piano — The operator proposes to play the piano all together.



The nest – With your hands on your heart, you choose a partner in the circle, you go to meet him and give him “something of yours”.

What's the ball of wool for you? –different version of the tennis ball exercise but using a large ball of wool.

The gift – we go to give the ball of wool to a companion but holding a piece of strand.

Biological fireworks – coloured handkerchiefs are shaken to the rhythm of music

Reading aloud – choral reading of a poem or song.

Closing moment – final feedback, creation of a final greeting, verbal or nonverbal.





Results

Consolidation of the link between social and cultural activities and the social-health field.

Decreased sense of loneliness, discomfort and abandonment of people with Alzheimer's/dementia, but also of the people who care for them.

From passive recipients of services and performances to active subjects with a voice and a social presence.

Sharing and exchanging information.

Intergenerational relationships

A more attentive community to the needs of fragile people and their families.

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Thank you!