



ENCIRCLING FAMILY

# Empowered Conversations for Professionals

# INTRODUCTION

Communication shapes our sense of who we are and how we connect with people around us. Dementia can get in the way of our usual way of connecting with others.

Empowered Conversations is an approach to dementia care that has been developed by a dedicated team of practitioners, people with lived experience and researchers over the last 8 years.

Sessions aim to offer participants space to:

- ▮ **Pause :**
  - to consider what it feels like to talk to someone with dementia, and
  - how it might feel for the person with dementia talking to us.
- ◀ **Reflect :**
  - on the feelings that our relationships generate and how these impact on communication, and
  - on the barriers to conversation that may prevent us from having the conversations we want.
- ▶ **Reconnect :**
  - using new approaches that help us to break down barriers and stay connected.

The course provides ways to connect and reduce stress around communication. The flexible online course uses discussions, group work, animations, real life examples and story sharing in order to explore, reflect and learn as a group. Participants will be encouraged to move towards a curious stance in their approach to situations and to those living with dementia.

After a rolling programme of courses for care professionals across Greater Manchester in January 2020, attendees shared the following:

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N said: “One of my tasks is to administer medication to residents, which has been difficult. I now make a connection with the residents first; I engage with them using simple open questions to start a conversation before handing out their medication.”

K said: “I’m not asking direct questions. I’ve been using the breathing exercise with residents who are anxious or stressed, it’s really helped to calm them down. I’ve slowed down to their level and turned any background noise down or off.”

“I’ve stopped using so many questions, I’ve used Invitation to Respond to start a conversation. I’m very mindful how overwhelming this can all be for them and I’m really thinking about their emotions.”

The course was part of a 3-year research project with the University of Salford demonstrating a statistically significant drop in stress and improvement in communications between caregivers and people living with dementia. It has been delivered to 800 family carers and professionals over the last 6 years. The University of Manchester are mid-way through a Randomised Control Trial of Empowered Conversations with the hope to develop this into a national trial in the future.

# COURSE CONTENT

<p><b>Week 1</b></p> <p>What's it like to talk to someone with dementia and what might it feel like for a person living with dementia to talk to us?</p> <p>Have identified or considered own feelings about communication with people living with dementia.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe experience of communication from point of view of person living with dementia (demonstrate empathy).</li> <li>• Have the opportunity to experience being part of a group with a shared interest.</li> <li>• What gets in the way of you having the conversations that you want to have?</li> <li>• Be able to describe own behaviour around communication.</li> <li>• Have explored barriers to communication and considered how these can be lessened.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 2</b></p> <p>Inviting people to join a conversation.</p> <p>Have explored a communication strategy (invitation to respond).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and use invitations to respond.</li> <li>• Be aware that communication is a skill that can be difficult.</li> <li>• Stop, Look and Listen</li> <li>• Have practiced active listening and understood the importance of being in the moment with people living with dementia.</li> <li>• Explored non-verbal communication.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 3</b></p> <p>Empathy and Memory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What have we learnt, what can we change and what can we celebrate</li> <li>• Have explored communication.</li> <li>• Be aware of the difficulties of communication for a person living with dementia.</li> <li>• Identified communication changes that you can practice.</li> <li>• Have a more curious approach to connections and communications.</li> </ul>

# For more information

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## CONTACT

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