Facilitator Guide

Meaningful Engagement and Changed Behaviour: Making Everyday Interactions Meaningful

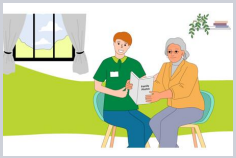
	What to do
	What to say

Overview

Key Information

This session can be completed in 20 minutes and consists of:

Video: About the topic



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Activity 1: Exploring the 360-degree photo

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Activity 2: Discussion

You will need:

- An internet-connected tablet or computer with a screen that can be viewed by everyone in the group. If you have a larger group, you may need a projector and screen. One activity is interactive, so consider having multiple devices.
- Pens and paper so participants can take notes. A whiteboard or butcher's paper (optional).

Learning Objectives

At the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the term 'meaningful engagement' in the context of dementia care
- Explain the role of meaningful engagement in minimising or preventing changed behaviour and supporting wellbeing
- Identify what could be meaningful to a person by looking at items around them
- Consider practical ways to engage meaningfully with a person living with dementia during everyday care.

Introduction

Ask participants to complete the short pre-training survey using this QR code. You can print QR code page from this guide for the group.

Introduce the session and explain what will be covered. (1 min)

In this session, we'll explore how meaningful engagement can improve a person's quality of life and may help reduce changed behaviour in people living with dementia in our care.

We'll learn what we mean by 'meaningful engagement', why it matters, and how we can include it in our daily routines.

We'll also explore strategies to make everyday interactions more engaging and fulfilling for both you and the person you care for.

Video: What is Meaningful Engagement?

Let's watch a short video to help us understand meaningful engagement and its impact on a person's quality of life and behaviour.

Go to the toolkit web page and play the video. (4 min)

Then, go to **Activity 1: How to Discover What a Person Finds Meaningful** (next page).

Activity 1: How to Discover What a Person Finds Meaningful

Lead a group activity in which participants look at a person's living space and find clues about what they might find meaningful.

Preparation: You'll need a device (laptop, tablet or projector and screen) to show the 360-degree photos.

We've learned what meaningful engagement is and why it's important. Now, we're going to look at how we can put this into practice. The first step to creating meaningful engagement opportunities is understanding what the person finds important or meaningful.

In this activity, we'll focus on how we can learn more about a person even if they or their family can't tell us directly.

We'll use a 360-degree photo to virtually explore the living space of a person living with dementia.

It's like what you might experience when you're visiting a person's room or living space.

We're going to look for clues in the room that might tell us about the interests and experiences of the person who lives there.

Go to the next page.

How to Access the Interactive Rooms

1. On the toolkit web page, click on one of the rooms.
2. Read the information about the person (Tony or Sylvie).

1 Tony's Room

Tony is living with dementia. He recently moved from a rural property into an aged care home in a large city.

Tony is withdrawn and not interested in joining the activities on offer. Staff have noticed that he paces back and forth in his room, particularly in the afternoons.

2 Sylvie's Room

Sylvie is living with dementia. She lives in her own home. Sylvie has recently lost weight. Daily visits from community care staff help her manage medications and prepare meals.

While Sylvie accepts help with medications, she gets agitated when staff enter the kitchen and open the fridge.

3. Drag the mouse around the photo to explore the room.
4. Click on the highlighted items for a closer look.
5. When you've clicked on all the interactive items, a **Continue** button will appear. Click it to see all the items on the screen. Refer to this screen for the rest of the activity.

If you're viewing **Tony's Room**, go to page 5 for more instructions.

If you're viewing **Sylvie's Room**, go to page 9 for more instructions.

1 Tony's Room

Get ready to become a detective. As you explore Tony's room, you'll see that some items are highlighted. Click on these items for a closer look. Let's think about each item and what it might reveal about Tony and his interests or experiences.

Use the prompts below to discuss what each item might tell us. For example: What do you think this item might tell us about Tony and his interests or experiences?

Item	What it might tell us
	**Tony is holding a wooden paper weight** • He might be bored. • He might like to do things with his hands. • Maybe he made the wooden block. • Maybe he likes the feel of the wood.
	**Aerial photo of a farm** • Maybe it's a farm that's important to Tony. • Maybe Tony lived there. • It would be interesting to know how the photo came to be taken.
	**Wedding photo** • Is this Tony and his wife or someone else who is important to him? • Was Tony married? • Where was it taken?
	**Photo of a man and a woman** • Is this Tony and his wife? • He might miss his wife. • Maybe she is still alive.
	**Crafted wooden box** • Maybe Tony made it. • Maybe someone significant made it for him or gave it to him. • What does he use it for?

Item	What it might tell us
	**Photo of Tony in racing gear beside a racing car** • Maybe Tony likes car racing. • Did he drive the car? • Does he like to watch car racing? • Was the photo of a special occasion, was it a gift?
	**Photo of Tony with a red sports car** • Maybe Tony likes restoring old cars. • Was this Tony's car? • Did he restore it?
	**Birthday cards** • It's likely been Tony's birthday recently. • You could guess he has family or friends who are in contact with him.
	**DVDs and gift wrap** • He has recently been given a DVD. Could have been a birthday present. • Perhaps he is a fan of Monty Python or a similar comedy.
	**Woollen tweed style blanket from Yorkshire** • This blanket might be significant to Tony. • Maybe he visited Yorkshire. • Maybe the person who gave it to him is special to him.
	**Mainly empty room** • The room has only a few personal items in it. There are no books, newspapers, photo albums or other items on the shelf or bedside table. There is only one picture on the wall. • There is no personal furniture in his room. • We know he's moved from a long way away. Maybe he didn't bring much with him. Maybe he doesn't have much to bring, or he didn't want to bring much. Maybe no one's brought things in for him yet.

How Can we Use This Information to Help Tony?

Lead a discussion (5 min) on how the items in Tony's room can be used to encourage meaningful interactions and activities. See the list below for ideas.

Even though Tony's room has little furniture and belongings, we found valuable clues about him and his possible interests.

While we shouldn't make assumptions based solely on these items, they give us a good starting point.

To ensure we focus on activities he truly enjoys, we need to consult with Tony and his family. But first, let's brainstorm!

From the items we discovered, what ideas for interactions or activities can you come up with to make Tony's day more meaningful? All ideas, whether simple or elaborate, are valuable.

Perhaps by meaningfully engaging Tony, we could see a decrease in his pacing behaviour.

Examples of Strategies to Engage Tony

Gather information: If possible, talk to Tony and his family or friends about his interests. This will help you identify activities he enjoys.

Conversation starters: Based on the room's clues (farming, family, woodwork, cars, Yorkshire), you can initiate conversations about these topics using the items as prompts. Share your own experiences and see how he responds.

Explore farming: Find out if Tony had a farm. If so, what kind? Did he raise cattle, sheep, or crops? If he grew crops, perhaps he'd enjoy visiting the care home's vegetable garden. If he had animals, consider interactions with chickens, visiting a farm, or visits from a dog. Be mindful that farming may not have been a positive experience for him (e.g., droughts, financial issues, long hours).

Virtual exploration: If the farm holds significance for Tony, use Google Maps to virtually explore the area. Consider armchair travel to places near his former farm.

Tasks and purpose: If Tony enjoyed farm work, perhaps he'd like tasks that give him a sense of purpose at the care home. This could include sweeping paths, watering plants, or helping in the vegetable patch.

Tinker time: If it seems Tony liked tinkering in his shed, provide him with simple activities to keep his hands busy. Consider balsa wood aeroplane models, bubble wrap or ribbons. Depending on his ability, you could offer easy-to-assemble furniture (e.g., Ikea with an Allen key).

Woodworking opportunities: Does the care home have activities like a men's shed or woodworking that Tony might enjoy?

Car racing: Check if Tony is still interested in car racing. Explore options like looking at car photo books, watching car races on TV, watching documentaries, visiting a racetrack, or playing with remote control cars.

Newspaper habit: Try giving Tony the newspaper if he used to read it regularly. He might enjoy continuing the habit. Try to source the local newspaper from where he used to live.

Photo memories: Could he create an album with you, family or visiting school children as a project? Could you ask his family to create a photo album? Look at the photos together and discuss them. Consider an electronic photo frame where his family can regularly send him new photos.

Picture board: Design a collage for his door using pictures related to his past work and favourite hobbies. This will provide visual cues to help orient himself and connect with positive memories, while also offering prompts for staff to engage him in conversation.

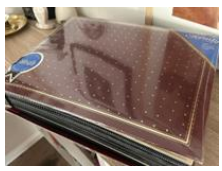
Movie sessions: Organise a movie afternoon with other residents interested in watching the DVD Tony received. If he enjoys it, consider similar movie sessions regularly watching movies he likes. Could he have a TV / DVD player in his room?

If you have time, you go to Sylvie's Room (next page). Otherwise, go straight to Activity 2 (page 12).

2 Sylvie's Room

As you explore Sylvie's room, you'll see that some items are highlighted. Click on these items for a closer look. Let's think about each item and what it might reveal about Sylvie and her interests or experiences.

Use the prompts below to discuss what each item might tell us. For example: What do you think this item might tell us about Sylvie and her interests or experiences?

Item	What it might tell us
	**Sylvie reading a French magazine** • Perhaps she's French. • Maybe she travelled to France or has lived there. Maybe she wishes she had. • Maybe she speaks French?
	**Photo album** • This might contain photos of important people in her life or experiences she's enjoyed in the past. • The location on top of the shelf suggests she might look through it regularly.
	**Sylvie's graduation photo** • This suggests Sylvie attended university. Her studies might be connected to her past career. • The presence of children in the photo hints at the possibility that she completed her degree while raising a young family.
	**Music CDs** • Sylvie might enjoy listening to music. • Does she prefer classical music or does she like other genres as well?
	**Cookbooks** • Sylvie might enjoy cooking. • She might like to try new recipes. • She might have worked in a restaurant or café or been a caterer.

Item	What it might tell us
	**Collection of jugs** • These jugs could be a collection Sylvie has built over time. • Do they hold any special meaning for her? • Where did they come from? Were they gifts?
	**Knitting in progress** • The basket's location on the chair suggests recent activity. Perhaps Sylvie is working on this knitting project and it's something she enjoys. • Perhaps it belongs to someone who visits Sylvie? • Does she knit for herself or others?
	**Bunch of fresh flowers in a vase** • The fresh flowers could be a recent gift from someone or perhaps Sylvie bought them herself. • Are flowers important to her? • Does she have a favourite?
	**Indoor pot plant** • Sylvie might be interested in nature and caring for living things. • The healthy state of the plant indicates it receives regular care, either by Sylvie herself or someone who visits her.
	**Artworks** • The presence of artwork suggests Sylvie might have an interest in art. • Perhaps she enjoys collecting pieces, or maybe these works hold sentimental value. • Could she have painted any of them or known the artists?

How Can We Use This Information to Help Sylvie?

Lead a discussion (5 min) on how the items in Sylvie's room can be used to encourage meaningful interactions and activities. See the list on the next page for ideas.

Sylvie's room provides lots of clues about her interests. Although there are many items in her room, we chose to highlight a selection.

While we shouldn't make assumptions based solely on the items we found, their potential meaning to Sylvie is worth investigating.

What ideas do you have for activities or interactions that could make care staff visits more meaningful for Sylvie? Don't be afraid to get creative – all ideas are welcome.

Our goal is to make care staff visits more engaging for Sylvie. By incorporating her interests into these interactions, Sylvie might feel less apprehensive when staff visit her kitchen to prepare meals.

Examples of Strategies to Engage Sylvie

Conversation starters: Use clues from her room (music, art, French magazines, cookbooks, university, flowers, photos, indoor plants), to initiate conversation. Share your own experiences and see how she responds. Use photos or objects in the room as prompts.

Music for relaxation: Explore whether music helps to calm Sylvie. Try playing a CD or the radio during visits. If she responds positively, experiment with different genres. You could even create a personalised playlist together. Consider arranging for her to attend community music sessions, if available.

Explore connection to France: If Sylvie speaks French, learn some simple phrases to practice with her. Ask her to teach you some basic words. This builds connection and shows you value her expertise. Look at French books together – pictures might spark stories about her favourite places and experiences. Consider 'armchair travel' using travel books or shows to visit her favourite locations virtually.

Cooking together: Involve Sylvie in meal preparation to make her feel valued and capable. Could she teach you something? Ask her to recommend a recipe that you can shop for and make. Aim to eat lunch together whenever possible.

Meaningful activities: While preparing lunch, see if Sylvie enjoys engaging in an activity like knitting. If knitting is important to her, could she use it to contribute, like knitting for charity (hospital teddies, animal shelter blankets)?

Recipes and memories: Explore her cookbooks together. Can you find a recipe she'd like you to make? Discussing the flowers in her room can lead to talking about flower types and who gave them to her. If she enjoys arranging flowers, could you bring some for her to arrange? Can you visit a garden centre to look at the plants and buy some seed or plants to pot?

Activity 2: Group Discussion – Applying the Learning to Our Workplace

Lead a group discussion using the guiding questions as prompts. (5 min)

Now, let's discuss what improving meaningful engagement means for our workplace.

Guiding Questions

- Has this training sparked any ideas for how to improve your interactions with people in your care?
- What steps could you take today to promote meaningful engagement with someone in your care?
- Think about a resident or client in your care. Can you identify something other staff might not yet know about them that you could share to help them connect with them more meaningfully?
- How might you support a person to connect with cultural practices that are important to them?
- How can you actively gather information about a resident's or client's preferences and interests?
- What are some creative ways to share information about what's important to a person with other staff members?
- For example, you could have a resident of the week. All staff are invited to add any small details about the person to a whiteboard in the staff room. You could use the Sunflower template to collate it.
- Share your ideas for making interactions more meaningful without necessarily needing more time.

See the next page for Take-Home Messages.

Take-Home Messages

- Meaningful engagement gives a person a sense of purpose, a reason to get up at the start of the day.
- Meaningful engagement may help reduce changed behaviour in a person living with dementia.
- Meaningful engagement is personal.
- Meaningful interactions enrich everyone's day.
- Even limited information can be used to spark connections.
- Every team member plays a role in enriching experiences.
- Meaningful engagement can occur in everyday interactions and help make the experience of receiving care more positive.
- Both creative and simple strategies can spark joy.
- Remembering someone's specific needs and preferences shows you care and value the person.
- Not everything is meaningful – be guided by the person's response as some memories can trigger a negative response.
- Set activities at an appropriate level to ensure success and avoid frustration.
- Never stop learning about a person. Meaningful engagement is a continuous process. Keep exploring!

Ask participants to complete the short post-training survey using this QR code. You can print QR code page from this guide for the group.

Follow-Up

To reinforce this learning, gather the group in a week or two for a follow-up session focused on reflection and practical applications.

- Think about your interactions with residents/clients since our last session. What specific actions have you taken to learn about what brings meaning to their lives?
- Can you share a unique detail about a resident/client that no one else might know? How will you share this information with the team and where will you document it for future reference?

- Have you implemented any strategies to enhance meaningful engagement with a resident/client? Describe your approach, the resident/client's response, and the overall impact.
- As a small group visit a resident's room. Based on the room's contents brainstorm ideas for engaging with the person who lives there.
- If you only had time to look at one of the 360-degree rooms in the toolkit session, consider another session to look at the second room.

More Information

- Contact DTA (https://dta.com.au/contact-dta/) to discuss delivery of the **Meaningful Engagement Workshop** in your workplace.

- Share information about what is meaningful to a person in a way that is accessible for all staff to see using **templates** such as:
  - **Sunflower**, NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation
    https://aci.health.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/285380/ACI-Agedcare-CHOPs-Sunflower.pdf
  - **This Is Me**, Alzheimer's Society UK
    https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/publications-factsheets/this-is-me
  - **Top 5**, NSW Clinical Excellence Commission
    https://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/improve-quality/teamwork-culture-pcc/person-centred-care/dementia-care

- **Life story templates**

  Lengthy social histories collected on admission often get buried in a person's file and can be too large to read. Instead focus on the little stories.
  - The everyday preferences that matter to the person.
  - Small acts of kindness that show compassion (such as knowing their favourite scent, what sporting team they follow, or their past job).

- **About Me Resources** (Dementia Support Australia): Use these to gather life history. https://www.dementia.com.au/resource-hub/about-me-resources

Pre-Training Quiz

Post-Training Quiz