

ASYMMETRICAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ELDERLY CARE

There are asymmetrical relationships between the nursing staff and the residents of a nursing home, as they enter into these relationships under different conditions (Schmedes, 2021; Steudter, 2015).

On the one hand, there is the caregiver.

Separate knowledge about the residents.



A clear service mandat.

For him/her, relationships with the residents represent a professional aspect.

On the other hand, there is an elderly person.

A person in need of care.



He/she has to use this service.

He/she is (more or less) in a relationship of dependence with the caregivers.

The intrusion (of the carers) into the privacy of the residents.

The relationships between caregivers and residents are primarily characterised by (physical) closeness, which can create a closer relationship (Schmedes, 2021).



However, the relationships are also characterised by a dependence on the caregivers, which can lead to different emotional reactions on the part of the residents (Schmedes, 2021; Steudter, 2015).

Residents are made aware of their own vulnerability through the caregivers' invasion into their privacy (Schmedes, 2021, Steudter, 2015).



This can lead to feelings of sadness and/or shame. As the feeling of shame is rarely communicated openly and honestly, this feeling often turns into anger, despair or sadness (Schmedes, 2021; Steudter, 2015)

These feelings can then negatively affect both the relationship and the quality of cooperation between caregivers and residents (Schmedes, 2021; Steudter, 2015).



Therefore, awareness of boundaries is very important in geriatric care.



Aiming for equal and participatory interaction

Even if the assymetric relationship constellation cannot be completely eliminated, caregivers should try to ensure that communication is as symmetrical as possible. For this purpose, the caregiver can try to adopt a certain attitude, in which the relationship with the older person is harmonious (Josuks, 2011).

The following basic attitudes are suitable for this:

Warmth

When the caregivers radiate warmth, the residents feel welcome. This creates a relaxed atmosphere (Josuks, 2011).

Respect

Respectful interaction is shown in the acceptance of the residents' emotions, opinions and life experiences. Respectful interaction makes the residents feel valued (Josuks, 2011).

Genuineness

It is important that the caregivers are sincere and authentic and do not try to deceive the residents (Adam, 2011).

Empathy

With an empathetic attitude, caregivers try to put themselves in the residents' shoes and understand their point of view (Josuks, 2011).

References

- Adam, G. (2011). Grundlagen der Kommunikation. In G. Adam, H. Josuks, R. Rogall-Adam & G. Schleinitz (Eds.), *Professionelle Kommunikation in Pflege und Management. Ein praxisnaher Leitfaden* (2nd. ed., pp. 16-87). Schlütersche.
- Schmedes, C. (2021). *Emotionsarbeit in der Pflege. Beitrag zur Diskussion über die physische Gesundheit Pflegenden in der stationären Altenpflege*. Wiesbaden.
- Steudter, E. (2015). Die gelungene Beziehung. Voraussetzung guter Pflege. *NOVAcura*, 46(4), 6-8.
- Images used were retrieved from Canva Pro and Pixabay.



Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Communicare is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Project number: 2020-1-DE02-KA204-007685. This publication reflects the views only of the author(s), and neither the Commission nor the National Agency can be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.