Imagining Forgetfulness... A Participation into the Intuitive Reality

by Desi Owens, MS, MSW, LCSW and Nader Shabahangi, Ph.D.

AgeSong is creating an adaptation of the classic PhotoVoice This project seeks to bring us closer to the person approach originally developed and implemented by Caroline behind the cognitive impairment label(s) by giving Wang, Mary Ann Burris, and colleagues. PhotoVoice projects us the opportunity to directly observe elders' experprovide a forum to actively engage individuals within communience of "dementia." Through this project we hope ities who have often been marginalized, overlooked, and unheard. to gain a better understanding – from our elders – This AgeSong-based project will focus on individuals who have about the "panorama of forgetfulness," a foundation been labeled as having dementia in an effort to establish mean- from which our attitudes and ways of caring have ingful two-way communication, prompting us to listen, and the potential of being significantly transformed. teaching us about the emotional worlds and representations of our elders.

Each resident participant will be paired with a trained staff person more about criteria for participation, please and/or intern who will provide assistance and join in the process contact Diana Chambers at 510-444-4684 or as the resident's "photo partner." Elders will be given digital dchambers@agesong.com. cameras to photograph elements in their everyday world and will be asked to take pictures of whatever they consider impor- This pilot project has been developed with the help tant or meaningful to them. Participants will have the opportunity of Desi Owens, AgeSong Project Consultant, and to tell their story both through the photographs that they take, Campus Planner at the UC Berkeley Center on Aging, and through any verbal comments that they wish to share about in collaboration with Nader Shabahangi, AgeSong their motivations for taking a picture, and/or any reactions that Founder, and the many senior residents of the they may have to their images.

For more detailed information about this project including all methods involved, and/or to learn

AgeSong communities.



432 Ivy Street San Francisco, CA 94102



AgeSong is proud of its partnership with Pacific Institute, an organization dedicated to gerontology and elder wellness.

AgeSong at Hayes Valley AgeSong at Laguna Grove AgeSong at Lakeside Park

Visit us online at www.agesong.com LIC# 385600373, 385600372, 015601384



Beyond Dementia Toward

Forgetfulness C

WARNING

by Jenny Joseph

WHEN I AM AN OLD WOMAN I SHALL WEAR PURPLE

With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me. And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter. I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells

And run my stick along the public railings And make up for the sobriety of my youth. I shall go out in my slippers in the rain And pick the flowers in other people's gardens And learn to spit



You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat And eat three pounds of sausages at a go Or only bread and pickle for a week And hoard pens and pencils and beermats and things in boxes

But now we must have clothes that keep us dry And pay our rent and not swear in the street And set a good example for the children. We must have friends to dinner and read the papers.

Creating Therapeutic Environments

Warning, p. 1 Successful Aging, p. 2 Finding the Intuitive Mind, p. 3 Imagining Forgetfulness, p. 4

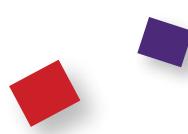


But maybe I ought to practice a little now? So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised

When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.

Taken from the book When I Am An Old Woman I Shall Wear Purple Edited by Sandra Martz

volume 5, 2009



Successful Aging?

by AgeSong staff

Successful Aging? Social scientists have been trying to define it for years. Have you achieved successful aging if you are 80 and have the productivity of a 35year-old, or the athletic prowess of a 50-year-old, or by having the body of a 40-year-old? At what point have we actually started "aging" anyway?

"We learn the value of human connection, about being part of community and sharing moments.

Those of us who embrace aging as a process that celebrates life, measure successful aging by how an individual defines purpose and finds joy in the moment and in daily interactions - no matter how big or small. The idea that purpose and joy can transcend pain, fragility, loss and even cognitive abilities goes back to tribal times. However, our fast-paced society often de-values the ability to look deep within and access other realities to find wisdom, traditions and spiritual expression. This problem is accentuated by the deplorable manner in which the media depicts the elderly and society's anti-aging viewpoint.

We are committed to changing this superficial and demeaning view of aging. We find that in our daily interactions with residents, even those with limited ability to communicate in traditional ways, we can learn. We learn the value of human connection, of being part of a community and of sharing moments. We learn that there is still purpose and joy in lives that endure the physical and mental challenges that often are associated with aging. And we learn that residents want to teach us and share with us, through traditional and nontraditional ways, the gifts and wisdom that often only life experiences can bring.

Successful aging cannot be measured by tangible benchmarks. Rather, we are challenged to be conscious of the gifts elders possess and try to share with us. We are also challenged to accept the gifts that our own aging process brings forth.

Creating Therapeutic Environments

Finding the Intuitive Mind

by AgeSong staff

Caregivers and family members have shared countless stories of amazement when a resident who has stopped communicating in traditional verbal ways suddenly astonishes us with a lucid expression of some sort. For instance, a resident who begins singing her favorite songs when she hears the tune in the distance, a seemingly nonresponsive resident who smiles and squeezes your hand when clay is placed into it, or a resident who suddenly begins tapping her finger to an old church hymn.

"...everything has its own possibility, its own meaning and yet is a mystery."

Expressive arts research shows that the arts, music, nature and spiritual connections can all have neurological and psychological possibilities as these experiences connect the person with forgetfulness to the deepest parts of one's being: the intuitive self and spiritual spaces

that go far deeper than verbal language. In Patricia LeFevre's article in the Catholic Reporter, Dr. Nan Lu, founding director of the Traditional Chinese Medicine World Foundation, compares the connection between Alzheimer's disease and the Consensus Reality Mind to that of night and day. Lu says, "Alzheimer's is like the darkness that is always behind the light; it's not separate from it." He continues, "The rational mind is gone, but the intuitive mind is still active. These persons can be our teachers. They can teach us that everything has its own possibility, its own meaning, and yet is a mystery." Dr. Lu advises caregivers to take persons with forgetfulness outside, expose them to the sights, smells, sounds and the feel of nature. Similarly, he urges giving persons with forgetfulness the chance to hear music, to dance, to paint, to hear poetry, to express the intuitive mind. He concludes that most of the great composers and artists created their great works using their intuitive mind to communicate.