



Look Who's Talking Too

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In 100 words or less, briefly describe your Best Practice.

The most basic right of every individual is the right to be heard and understood. When others take the time and effort to listen then we know they truly care about us as a human being. It was in consideration of this fundamental truth that we conceived and implemented our facility's **Best Practice**. Shortly after admitting a young Resident faced with the challenges of Cerebral Palsy, we began seeking a way to improve his ability to communicate. This led to the initiation of another practice to increase communication with Residents who, due to memory loss, have chronic difficulty with expression.

What problem does your Best Practice address and what is its primary purpose?

Communication and the ability to successfully convey thoughts, feelings, opinions, needs, and desires in order to engage with others in conversation from day to day have a direct influence on our dignity and quality of life in any environment. But this is especially true in the unique *Skilled Nursing* environment. Our Resident coping with CP is extremely intelligent and became acquainted with staff and other Residents quickly. He is always on the lookout for interaction with others yet his ability to communicate was limited. Due to his high cognition, he needed a device that would allow him to communicate as close to conversationally as possible.

Additionally, we reached out to Residents struggling with Alzheimer's and dementia in an effort to create physical, mental, and emotional sensations thus promoting the stimulation of endorphins within the brain. This experiential **Best Practice**, affectionately known in our facility as "**MEMORY LANE**", quickly became a proactive way to increase communication and recall in the minds and hearts of these Residents.

What group(s) of residents and others are involved in your Best Practice and how does it work?

Initially, our Speech Therapist arranged for a technology specialist from the *United Cerebral Palsy Foundation* to come to the facility and research a proper communication device for the Resident to try. He was the most successful with an android based tablet or iPad. These were the only devices that would allow for a limitless amount of vocabulary options. Subsequently, the entire staff at our facility on every level became involved in the implementation of the communication device.

Our entire facility dining room is transformed into **MEMORY LANE**. Here, our Residents enter a bastion of stimulus and motivation all intended to help them remember the simplest pleasures in life. The environment is transformational in many ways. First of all there is music playing throughout the whole experience. These are songs they would be very familiar

with such as, “*Peg of my Heart*” or “*I’ll be Loving You Always,*” and they create an authentic mood in the room providing a catalyst for recall. There are tables or stations set up throughout that center on a particular theme and the Residents are escorted by staff to the theme that captures their particular interest. The themes range from costume jewelry to kittens and puppies to sanding blocks and wood. Residents remain at a station as long as their attention is engaged and once they lose focus they are encouraged to move to another station that draws their interest.

What has your Best Practice accomplished and how have you been able to tell this?

The primary accomplishment of our iPad device ***Best Practice*** was affirming to the Resident that we wanted to accurately hear what he had to say. He now knows we care about what he is thinking and feeling and that we wanted to give him the opportunity to communicate with us thoroughly. For instance, prior to receiving his communication device, this Resident could only use gestures to convey his thoughts and these were, at times, simplified to assumptions based on certain sounds he might inflect. But now he is able to effectively communicate with much greater detail exactly what he wants to say. It has also helped on a social level. Upon implementation of the device, his mood drastically changed as it seemed to bring him out of the unique isolation that was brought on by a communication barrier. He was also able to communicate negative experiences as well such as bad dreams.

However, the greatest accomplishment of our ***Best Practice*** was raising awareness among facility staff to the constant need for seeking new ways to communicate with all our Residents regardless of their cognition or disability level. Our ***Best Practice*** is about creating a **Culture of Communication** within our Skilled Nursing Facility. The iPad device and ***MEMORY LANE*** enhance this culture in unique ways. To see the determination and excitement on the face of a Resident as they sand smooth a rough block of wood or witness wonder on the face of another as they pet a soft, cuddly animal is evidence that ***MEMORY LANE*** fosters communication that is both effective and endearing.

What problems, obstacles, or challenges might other facilities face in replicating part or all of your innovation? Were there any adverse effects or any ways that things turned out differently than you had planned? Do you know of any facilities which have tried this or a similar Best Practice idea?

The greatest challenge of our ***Best Practice*** is actually maintaining a constant awareness and sense of urgency when it comes to communication with Residents. We consistently attempt to inspire our staff to practice a **Culture of Communication** with every Resident they care for. We accomplish this perpetual epiphany through “*Sensitivity Training*” and regular in-service meetings. In one such training, we asked volunteers who are CNA’s to wear glasses that had been coated with Vaseline in order to replicate a Resident who may have impaired vision. This exercise allowed the care giver to get a sense of what it would be like to try and communicate within such realities and promoted awareness of the circumstances that many of our Residents face daily. “*Sensitivity Training*” is very effectual and stays with the staff long after the training is complete.

*What was the cost to implement your Best Practice? How did you pay for it? When word got around regarding what was needed for the iPad, everyone wanted to help! Donations were made by local church congregations and the *United Cerebral Palsy Foundation*. Vendor donations and the facility budget also chipped in. There were even personal donations made by members of our staff and other family members. The total cost of the initial iPad practice was around \$1300.00.*

iPad: \$900.00

iPad Communication Application: \$300.00

iPad Holder / Custom Wheel Chair Accessory: \$100.00

It's true that the best things in life are free! *MEMORY LANE* required no additional cost to implement. The facility staff brought items from home that they were no longer using to create the themed stations.

What are the reasons you consider this Best Practice to be excellent and innovative?

Our iPad device *Best Practice* is excellent in nature simply because it directly improves the Resident's quality of care, dignity, and quality of life. He has begun the journey of learning how to use a new means of communication. He is making great progress as the Speech Therapist and other facility care givers continue to work alongside him in the effort. The innovation of our *Best Practice* speaks for itself every time the Resident conveys clearly what he desires to say! We look forward to all the conversations we will have with him in the future.

By creating and maintaining a **Culture of Communication** in our facility, our entire staff looks forward to hearing the thoughts of all our Residents, regardless of their capabilities or limitations, through the gift of meaningful interaction. As we practice *MEMORY LANE*, we are already beginning to realize that communication is far more than mere words. Because of our *Best Practice*, we can now more completely comprehend that communication must sometimes be created and the effort it takes to listen and understand is beneficial to both our Residents and the entire staff.



iPad Device is introduced to the Resident for the first time.



Resident enjoys using his new communication device daily.

Below: Endorphin boosting photos and costume jewelry are set up at different table stations for ***“Memory Lane”***.





A Resident enjoys **"Memory Lane"**.

Residents and staff are fully engaged during the activities of **"Memory Lane"**.



"Memory Lane" encourages Resident socialization as well as good moods.

Here, a Resident remembers and sings the lyrics to **"I'll Be Loving You Always"**.





Residents dance down **"Memory Lane"**

"Memory Lane" helps Residents rediscover lost excitement.



A Resident is determined to get a block of wood as smooth as he possibly can.

Endearing moments shape **"Memory Lane"**.

