

Residents' Rights 2011

Opening the Door by Celebrating Relationships



Small Group Discussion Training Guide

This small group discussion activity, often referred to as a learning circle, is part of the national effort to celebrate Residents' Rights during the month of October. This is a training based on the activity, *Opening the Door by Celebrating Relationships*, created by The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care.

Research shows that supportive relationships are critical to well-being. Respecting the strengths, preferences and needs of individuals form the foundation for a nurturing community. This activity engages staff, family and residents in a conversation that identifies each person as unique. It also demonstrates the right to a dignified existence, self-determination, and communication with and access to persons and services inside and outside the facility {483.10}.

Although you will be inviting residents, staff and family members to this activity, it is not necessary that all residents that participate in the activity have a family member present. What is important is that the recorder takes notes, so that the information that is shared during the discussion may be used by the facility to further nurture healthy relationships.

To Do:

1. Read through this material. The goal is to get a group together and have a conversation (learning circle) about relationships.
2. Set up an appointment with the administrator, social service director or other appropriate facility staff and sit down with him or her and explain what you would like to happen with this activity.
3. The administrator or other staff person needs to select a day, time and place to have a learning circle which engages staff, family and residents in a conversation that identifies each person as unique. Although this activity does not require that staff, family members and residents all be present, it is most effective when all three groups participate together.
4. Facility staff will invite family, residents and staff to the learning circle (a sample invitation is on the next page). The ideal number of participants is 10-15. If you have more than 20 involved, form more than one group and assign each group a facilitator. The group facilitator should be experienced and have a good rapport with staff, residents and family members. The facilitator may be the ombudsman or a staff member.
5. On the day of the activity, the facility will need to provide a flipchart and markers as well as a space where everyone can gather in a circle. Once everyone arrives, gather them in a circle, including a reporter, possibly the ombudsman, who is willing to record answers on a flipchart, without any obstructions blocking their view and explain how a learning circle works:
 - The facilitator poses a question.
 - The participant shares his or her answer or view and then the person to the right or left of the person goes next.
 - The process continues around the circle until all have shared.
 - Cross talk is not allowed. You may not talk when someone else is talking.
 - A person may pass but will have another opportunity to share after everyone else shares.
 - Once everyone has shared, the floor is open for general discussion.
6. If this is a good experience, consider holding a learning circle again with a different group of people and the same questions or the same group of people with different questions.

Sample Invitation



Dear _____,

In celebration of Residents' Rights month, we are having a get together on _____ to honor the relationships in our lives. We will meet in _____ for about an hour and would love it if you would join us.

See you there!

(Signature)

For the Facilitator

PRESENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

In order to make your job as the presenter easier, following are instructions for you and for you to give to the participants. The bold print in the presentation outline is for the sections that facilitators can quote directly. Text that is boxed is used to help easily refer to exercises or examples that are included in the presentation.

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Thank the participants for coming and briefly introduce yourself, give your title and explain your position. Gather everyone in a circle without any obstructions blocking their view and explain how a learning circle works.

### Learning Circle

- The facilitator poses a question.
- The participant shares his or her answer or view and then the person to the right or left of the person goes next.
- The process continues around the circle until all have shared.
- Cross talk is not allowed. You may not talk when someone else is talking.
- A person may pass but will have another opportunity to share after everyone else shares.
- Once everyone has shared, the floor is open for general discussion.

**Today we are here to celebrate the value of your relationships by entering into a conversation based on questions I will ask you. After I ask the question, we will go around the circle starting with the person on my right, and you will share your answer with the group. You may pass if you wish, but you will have another opportunity to share after everyone else shares. You may not talk when someone else is sharing, but once everyone has shared, the floor is open for general discussion. Remember to be respectful of other points of view and stay focused on the question that has been posed.**

**To begin, I would like to define the term relationship. A relationship is defined as a state of connectedness between people, whether it be with a friend, family member or colleague. One of the main things people often think about when being in a relationship is the emotional benefits. A relationship gives you a supportive cushion when faced with life problems, so you don't have to go it alone. It's always nice to have that support system.**

**Now we are going to answer a series of questions and at the end of our time together today, we hope to have ways of celebrating relationships here at the home.** If you want, hand out the list of questions included at the end of this training to the participants making sure the residents receive the resident sheet and the staff/family receives the staff/family sheet.

**The first question is: What are the qualities of a good relationship?**

Ask the person to your right to answer the question and have the recorder write down answers on the flipchart. Be prepared with an example in case no one feels comfortable starting the discussion. For example, you could share that a quality that you feel makes a good relationship is when two people have a common interest.

**Now look at the list and this time as we go around, when it is your turn, share which of the listed qualities best describes what you bring to the relationship, and we'll circle (or put a check) next to them.** You may want to use different ink to demonstrate which qualities are selected more than others. Go around the circle and have participants select the qualities that they bring to a relationship. Remember after everyone answers, the floor is open for general discussion.

**Next we are moving into asking questions about other people with whom we have relationships. If you are a resident, choose a special person (either family or staff) who provides care for you (perhaps it is even someone who is here today). If you are a staff member or family member, think of someone you care for (hopefully in this room) and be prepared to answer some questions.**

Continue the learning circle by asking questions #3-#7. Decide if you want the reporter to continue writing down answers on the flipchart or simply take notes on paper. The recorded answers will come in handy when the activity is over and may be used by the facility to further nurture healthy relationships.

**We have had some great discussion on relationships and how we learn from one another and grow as a result of the relationships in our life. At this time, we want to celebrate our relationships by answering a few more questions.**

Continue the learning circle by asking questions #8 & #9.

**This discussion time has been good. I hope you enjoyed our time together and have some great information on relationships that you can take away with you. I do have one final question. How can you use the information we shared today to foster better relationships?**

Solicit answers for the final question.

**On your way out, I am going to give you a sheet that takes you through the benefits of a good relationship.**

Hand out the sheet to the participants of the learning circle.

## **Questions for Resident:**

1. What are the qualities of a good relationship?
2. Share which of the qualities listed best describes what you bring to a relationship.

Now choose one special person (either family or staff) who provides care for you and answer the following questions:

3. What are your caregiver's strengths?
4. What are your caregiver's special characteristics?
5. What have you learned from your caregiver?
6. What is a favorite memory of your caregiver?
7. How has your relationship with your caregiver opened doors for you?

Now let's celebrate our relationships.

8. What are ways to celebrate relationships (these can be group rituals such as holiday picnics or daily one-on-one rituals such as saying thank you)?
9. What are ways to include these ideas into the life of the long-term care community?

## **Questions for Staff and Family Members:**

1. What are the qualities of a good relationship?
2. Share which of the qualities listed best describes what you bring to a relationship.

Now choose one person you provide care for and answer the following questions:

3. What are the resident's strengths?
4. What are the resident's special characteristics?
5. What have you learned from the resident?
6. What is a favorite memory of the resident?
7. How has your relationship with this resident opened doors for you?

Now let's celebrate our relationships.

8. What are ways to celebrate relationships (these can be group rituals such as holiday picnics or daily one-on-one rituals such as saying thank you)?
9. What are ways to include these ideas into the life of the long-term care community?

## Ten Benefits to Maintaining Good Relationships by Laurie Wilhelm

- 1. Trust:** Long-term relationships are based on trust. When we trust others, we are more relaxed, comfortable and willing to be ourselves without any pretenses or trying to maintain a facade of someone we're not.
- 2. Acceptance:** Once we experience trust with others, we can be honest about our weaknesses and shortcomings because we're confident that we will be accepted for who we are, without judgment or criticism.
- 3. Support:** Our lives go through many changes, some planned and some take us by surprise. In either case, they often take us out of our comfort zone and challenge us to grow and become more than we were before. Good, healthy relationships give us the support and encouragement we need to rise to new and different challenges.
- 4. A Kind Ear:** We often think of good communication skills as being able to speak well. That's only half of it. The ability to listen well is the other half. Having someone who will listen non-judgmentally when you're feeling down or frustrated and want to "vent" gives you the freedom to express yourself. Sometimes you just need to get something off your chest without feeling like you have to watch every word you say.
- 5. Understanding:** When someone knows you well enough to understand where you're "coming from" and instantly know the context in which you're speaking, it's easier to open up. Individuals in long-term relationships have a history of shared experiences that build a mutual understanding so they "get you" without a lot of explanation.
- 6. Someone to Call On When You Need a Hand:** Everyone, from time to time, needs a hand from a friend, colleague, peer, or family member. This can be in the form of advice, a new job, or assistance with a particular project in which you need to call on another's expertise.
- 7. Referrals and References:** You can count on the people with whom you have a good relationship to give you a positive reference or referral – they're more likely to be a good advocate for you and expound on your strengths and strong points.
- 8. Share and Celebrate:** Celebrating with people who truly care about you and want to celebrate with you when your life is going well, when you secured a promotion, or when you bought your first house is a ton of fun. Being acknowledged for your accomplishments is a rewarding experience and when you have good relationships, most want to be part of celebrating your success.
- 9. Reduced Stress:** Sharing your life with friends and coworkers who you trust, who accept, understand and support you reduces stress because you have camaraderie and, therefore, less potential for interpersonal conflicts. Good relationships bring about the best in work teams and families by reducing the anxieties that cause stress and, at the same time, good relationships cultivate a sense of well-being and emotional security.
- 10. Happiness and Satisfaction:** Having good relationships means there's a mutual like for one another. Being around people you like and who like you create situations that are harmonious, supportive, and well, happy. You have an overall feeling of satisfaction in your life – be it at work, at home, or in your community.