

Diversional Special Event - Armchair Travel Programme

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1. Introduction

In early 2010, in conversation between a member of the Diversional Therapy Team and residents, the subject of travel was discussed; the regret for some resident who had never experienced the excitement of travel due to health or fund restrictions, the enjoyment and memories for those that had and the disappointment of not travelling to desired destinations, were all mentioned. This led to the Diversional Therapy Team discussing how they could recreate the anticipation, enjoyment and adventure of travel for De Paul Villa residents and the innovative idea to recreate the experience of travel, within the facility, the Armchair Travel programme, was born.

It was thought the stimulation of experiencing the different cultures, seeing the different architecture, tasting the different foods, listening to the different music and to others recalling their experience while visiting the different countries would trigger memories of travels, holidays and experiences from the past. It was thought it would help to recreate the feelings of enjoyment felt during those times spent with family and friends and would create laughter when listening to the funny tales of past adventures. As Donna Jackson Nakazawa states in her book *Recalling cherished memories is good for you*,

'... being able to call up positive and detailed memories helps us to deepen our inner sense of well-being and joy and we know that a greater sense of well-being and joy is good for our body and soul.'

The idea of the Armchair Travel programme was raised at the next resident's meeting and was met with such enthusiasm the destination and date were chosen for the first trip.

Over the last four years the residents of De Paul Villa have travelled to seven destinations; New Zealand in February 2010, Ireland in March 2011, Africa in March 2012, Italy in October 2012, Mexico in March 2013, Hawaii in September 2013 and the most recent the Philippines in April 2014. Research shows that *'positive memories elevate our mood in the long-term.'* (Donna Jackson Nakazawa) and certainly each travel day has far exceeded the desired expectations of outcome, positively impacting

on resident wellbeing and enjoyment, from a brighter outlook on life to increased appetite and improved sleep pattern, with ongoing discussion of the travel day for weeks after the event.

References.

Recalling cherished memories is good for you. Donna Jackson Nakazawa.

2. Methodology

The Armchair Travel programme commences two months before the actual day of travel with its inclusion for discussion, on the resident's meeting agenda. At the meeting resident discussion covers the level of interest in a planned Armchair Travel day, suggestions of inclusions for the day, discussion and decision of country of destination and date of travel. All interested residents have an opportunity to voice their opinion and table their suggestions. After what is usually much discussion a consensus is made and the destination and date are decided.

The Diversional Team develop a master plan listing each step required in organizing the travel day; including the steps of preparation and meetings required with other departments, with a general idea of what each step will achieve. The master plan is focused on the objective of the programme; to create a sense of adventure, awareness and excitement by simulating a day of travel, experiencing a different environment through the use of all senses, to ensure the desired outcomes; enjoyment, fun, laughter, enjoying and sharing past memories, interest and gained knowledge of other cultures and creating new memories, are achieved. For residents with an impaired cognitive awareness the desired outcome is the enjoyment of moments of pleasure through the use of different senses.

Posters are developed and displayed informing every one of the Armchair Travel day and requesting the use of any items from the country of destination; posters, costumes, music, photos, film, video, DVDs and artifacts, anything that is a part of the country's culture, history or lifestyle and the entertainment group appropriate to the country is sourced and booked for the day. In the weeks leading

up to the day the resident's arts and craft group will make decorations for the walls. With the buzz of activity for the travel day, the excitement and anticipation grows each day.

The menu plan for the day of travel is developed with the Catering Supervisor, taking into consideration the suggestions from residents. Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea are modeled on the cuisine of the country of destination, the table dressing is planned using the theme and colours of the country and drinks to accompany the main meal, beer and wine if possible from the country of destination, are decided.

An organizational plan for the day of travel is developed; boarding, take off, in-flight DVD, arrival, morning tea, entertainment, lunch, return flight, quiz/trivia, arrival and afternoon tea, listing the order each stage occurs and the times they commence. The Diversional Therapy team will spend quite some time developing this plan, in consultation with the catering, maintenance and nursing departments, to ensure the success of the day. Once completed relevant departments are given a copy of the plan.

A week before the travel day the main resident lounge is decorated with all the items made, borrowed or purchased and boarding passes are available for purchase and collection from the reception.

At every activity or group gathering, in the two months leading to the travel day, a casual update is given on how the preparations are progressing. Resident involvement plays a major role in each step, it is only with this input and feedback can it be sure the event being created is the resident's vision of the day.

On the day of the event, the residents enter the air craft through the airport departure lounge and metal detector. Once seated the Pilot, a resident proudly takes on this role and has done for all seven trips, delivers his welcome speech over the PA system and the safety demonstration is given by the Air

Stewarts. The rest of the day is filled with wonderful company, great music and food, interesting cultural facts and much fun and laughter, see attachment A1 & 2; a selection of photos from the day.

To ensure the residents enjoyed the day, a random selection of residents are asked to complete an Activity Feedback form and the day's events are raised at the next resident meeting, not only to ensure the programme was enjoyed as residents are also asked for any suggestions for improvement. Resident feedback, on the Diversional Therapy programme, is also sort as part of the resident survey twice a year, see attachment B1 & 2; completed feedback forms after the April programme.

3. Department Collaboration

Internally, all departments of De Paul Villa work together to ensure the many different settings required throughout the day are arranged and ready for resident participation. For example from the airport departure lounge and air craft setting to the show setting to the restaurant setting and back to the air craft setting, a great achievement requiring many hands and cool heads, it is a testament to the resident focus of all.

Externally, a local entertainment group is booked to perform after morning tea has been served. The group is required to take on the theme of the country travelled to; to dress in costume, to incorporate the music and instruments in the performance and to take on the persona of the people. The group take on the spirit of the day with their show filled with skits, jokes, music and song, see attachment A1 & 2; a selection of photos from the day.

4. Project Sustainability

The major expense for the Armchair Travel programme is the food for the day, each meal and snack is above the normal budgeted daily figure, an extra \$5.00 per resident is allocated for these events and is included in the facility food budget as a special event. The average extra cost per resident to date

for the Armchair Travel Day has been \$4.23; this figure could be adjusted, if required, to suit a smaller budget. De Paul Villa will continue to include this special event cost in the annual budget.

Alcohol and soft drink are offered with the mid-day meal, this cost is primarily funded from the purchase of the boarding passes for the travel day. Residents, who are able, purchase a boarding pass for \$2.00 from reception, during the week prior to the day. To date on average \$84.00 has been raised from the sale of the boarding passes, any shortfall is met by the Diversional Therapy funds.

All other expenses; the entertainer's fee, approximately \$100.00, any wall or table decoration purchases, approximately \$100 and miscellaneous items are funded from the Diversional Therapy budget and Auxiliary Account; the proceeds from fund raising carried out throughout the year; raffles, the facility's small goods shop and donations. Here to, this figure could be adjusted to suit a smaller budget, if required.

5. Outcome

The objective of the programme was to create a sense of adventure, awareness and excitement by simulating a day of travel and experiencing a different environment using all senses, to ensure the desired outcomes; enjoyment, fun, laughter, enjoying and sharing past memories, interest and gained knowledge of other cultures and the creation of new memories, were achieved for all residents of De Paul Villa. It is acknowledging the achieved outcomes will be different for some residents, depending on a physical and or cognitive impairment. Here the focus is to achieve some part of the desired outcome albeit the enjoyment of moments of pleasure through the use of taste, smell or sound.

Whilst these achieved outcomes are clearly visible on the day supporting documentation is sort for quality assurance, these include an activity feedback forms, completed by a random selection of residents, see attachment B1 & 2; an example of the feedback forms after the April programme. The day is also raised and discussed at the next resident meeting, in this forum any suggestions for

improvement are also sort from the residents. Resident feedback, on the Diversional Therapy programme, is also sort as part of the resident survey twice a year, see attachment C; an example of the resident survey most resent to this travel day.

6. Summary

The goal of the Armchair Travel programme is to allow residents, from all areas of De Paul Villa, high care needs, low care needs and dementia specific, to experience the wonders of travelling to another country, regardless of a physical or cognitive impairment, through sound, sight, taste, touch and smell. To stimulate memories of trips taken in days gone by, rekindling the feelings of enjoyment, love and achievement felt on those trips with family and friends and to promote fun and laughter with new friends, creating new memories for some and moments of pleasure for others.

Armchair travel trips are full day events with the excitement building several weeks before the day of travel, for both residents and staff. Conversation of past trips, reminiscing about funny antics of family and friends during these trips, gathering mementos for display and discussion of foods enjoyed occur during everyday activities leading up to the day of travel.

The week of the trip is filled with excitement as the main resident lounge is decorated, resident 'boarding passes' are issued and final readiness is made. The day of the Armchair travel trip incorporates as many experiences as possible of overseas travel including; the airport departure and Customs process and the Airline Steward's pre take off safety demonstration and the whole day is filled with the country of destination's culture, food, music and costume.

The travel days are enjoyed by all who participate and achieve the set goals on an individual level according to each resident's cognitive and physical ability.