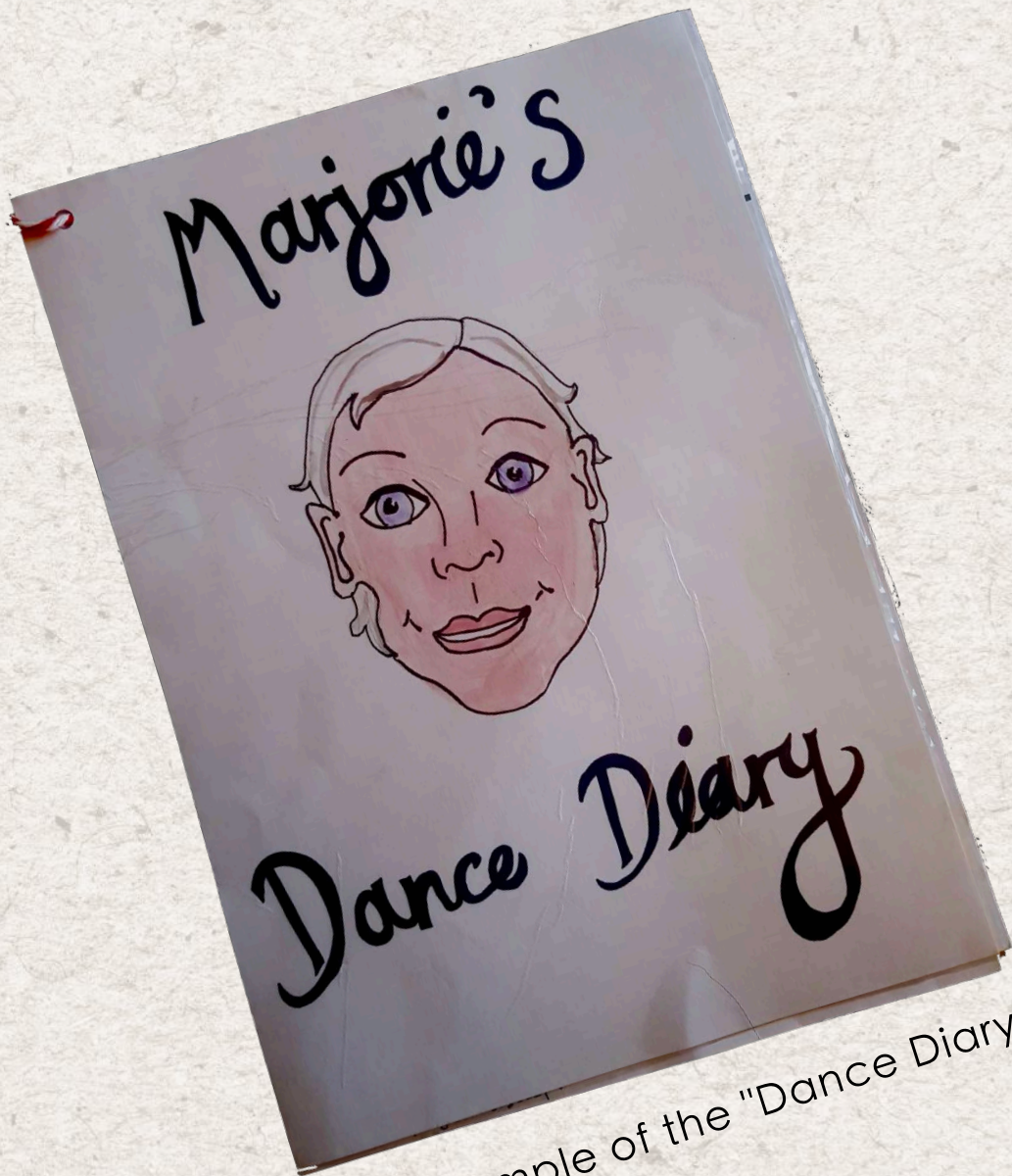


In Mature Dance Company

Introduction to the "Dance Diary"



* An example of the "Dance Diary"

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Introduction

As one of the dance artists who has been leading on the In Mature Dance Project, I have made several discoveries throughout the past 2 years. I have developed my practice, worked with a person-centred approach and introduced "dance diaries" for the one-to-one participants. Throughout this experience, there have been a number of challenges and observations:

Communication

The one-to-one sessions were quite unique as they gave me the time to really learn about each individual participant. This information could have included music they loved, topics they discussed, poetry they could recite, or movement activities they responded well to. What I uncovered during the sessions were often unknown to the family or care staff. Passing this information on to staff verbally meant it often got lost. It became clear that sharing new information in a productive manner was vital in continuing a person-centred care approach throughout their lives.

Development

As I learnt about each participant, it meant that I could tailor each session to build trust and encourage growth. I created movement-based activities around topics that the participant was passionate about. The more I worked with an individual, the more I learnt about them and their passions. This meant I could develop tasks and the results and content became richer.

Achievement and purpose

In a couple of cases, participants showed signs of feeling low, depressed and despondent. I tailored sessions for these participants, so they had specific goals and aims to achieve each week. I knew it was important to improve their sense of self and purpose. Over time, it was clear that the sessions were having a positive impact on the participants mental health.

The Dance Diaries.

I witnessed some positive results during the one-to-one sessions which were not being documented or fully observed. I introduced "the dance diaries" to try and improve communication and highlight these results for the participants support network.

The "dance diary" was a personalised document that kept an account of the activities that took place during the one-to-one's.

The diary was completed at the end of the session with the help of the participant. It documented the participants mood, the activities that took place, observations, progress, quotes and suggestions.

This diary was then placed in the participants room where it was accessible for the participant, the staff and family members. It was appealing and exciting to read with a drawing of each participant on the front cover.

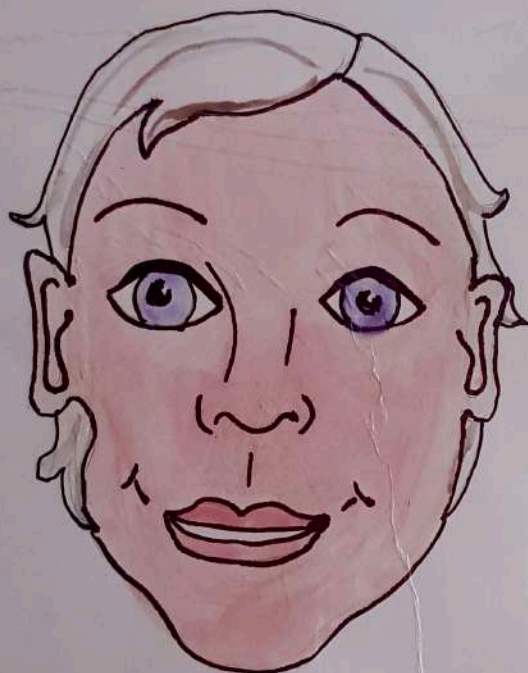
There were two pages that could be filled out:

"What I've done" (logging the activities/observations)

"What I love" (suggestions.)

The other aim of the "dance diary" was to leave a legacy for the project. It gave suggestions of activities that the support network could do with the participant once the project was over.

Marjorie's



Dance Diary

An Example of the "Dance Diary".

Hand drawn laminated document with the ability for pages to be added and to be hung up. A portrait on the front cover.

What I've Done

19/09/19: I met Ellen today who is a dance artist and wanted to visit me. I was a bit cautious and quiet so we did lots of gentle relaxing activities. I really enjoyed watching Ellen's face, and I began to trust her to hold hands. Just as she moved closer I noticed her blue fluffy "fun" jumper. I liked it, ALOT. She let me touch and stroke it. I really love being tactile and squeezing things.

Ellen told me about my dance diary, that its a way to keep a record of what we get up to. This can be used by my friends, family and carestaff.

03/10/19: Today, I was quite bright eyed, and had more confidence today. Ellen tried new movement activities. We tried props and I enjoyed dancing with a blue Silky Scarf Fan. Something I love to do is fold fabric into small shapes. Ellen played different music, but the song I liked the most was "Edelweiss". I loved to put palm to palm and sway to the music. I love to sing to this song... I like to sing loud.

17/10/19: I was a bit tired and quite today. I wasn't up for any big dance moves today, so Ellen put on my favourite song "Edelweiss" and did small hand massages. This included drawing circles on my hands, giving heat in the palm of the hands, stroking - fingers, up and down the arm. I enjoyed singing gently whilst dosing my eyes. I found it so relaxing

"What I've Done"

Documenting what happened during the session: activities, mood, quotes, break through moments, concerns and observations.

What I love

- I really love to observe. lots of eye contact.
- I love soft things and bright colours.
- feeling fluffy jumpers
- I love to help... especially folding fabric
- I love sound of music 🎵 "Edelweiss."
- I would LOVE a radio or a CD player in my room,
so I can listen to the sound of music
- I'm really good at reciting "Albert and the lion"
and love to read it with friends and family.
- I love to talk about my family and my mum.

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"What I love".

Documenting passions and giving suggestions.

Case study 1: June

When I first met June she was completely bed bound with limited movement. I knew very little about her, but she showed signs of mid/late stages of dementia. During our first session her verbal communication was jumbled, she struggled to understand questions being asked. She showed signs that conversational skills were poor. Over time I began to understand her communication style and it became easier to understand what she was trying to tell me.

I introduced different music genres to try and observe a connection. The breakthrough moment was when I played an opera track: "La Donna e'mobile" (Rigoletto) and she proceeded to sing every word. This song physically changed the way June moved, she became more animated and was more active compared to previous moments of the session. With this discovery I realised that no care staff or family member were aware about June's passion for opera. This observation was documented in her dance diary with suggestions given that a music player be added to her room and to hand hold and sway to the music. 2 weeks later, this suggestion had been followed through.

Throughout the duration of the project, I introduced tasks that I knew would inspire June. She began to show positive signs of development-cognitively and physically.

"This is My song"

"I'm glad you've done this today"

"I can't wait to see you again"

Some breakthrough moments that June made:

- She began to recognise my face and then my name.
- She recognised her dance diary, particularly the portrait of herself on the front cover.
- She began to open up about her family and gave more information about what she enjoyed in formed sentences.
- She could fully recite the poem "The Lion and Albert." This was documented in the diary with a suggestion to read through it with her. A copy of the poem was included in her diary.
- She loved music from the South Pacific, in particular "One enchanted evening." This song was one that she would dance and sing along to.
- Her movement range and ability improved. In her early sessions hand holding and small swaying was all she could manage. In the final sessions she could move her legs, have large arm movements, use props, she had improved her hand and finger dexterity, and could perform mirroring exercises.

Everything that I observed and every achievement she made was documented. I gave suggestions in the hope that family and staff would use the information to enrich her life. This was evident when the arts co-ordinator from the home informed me about the progress she had acted on. This included:

- Getting June out of bed and doing an arts activity together whilst listening to "One enchanted evening."
- Watching "south Pacific" together.
- Wanting to purchase extra equipment to help June watch the movie together (a magnifying screen.)

Case study 2: Bob

When I first met Bob I discovered quite a lot about him quickly. He had good verbal communication, had very early stages of dementia, he had Parkinsons and he lacked confidence in leaving his room. He felt the Parkinsons had a huge impact on his movement. He would often fall, felt his body was weak and often showed signs of feeling depressed, confused and lonely.

Although Bob had early dementia, he was incredibly adept at communicating. This meant that Bob wanted to have lengthy sessions to talk through issues he was facing (discussing worries about his family, nightmares and his confusion with dementia). When I introduced the "dance diary" it gave him a new focus and I knew that this was a tool that he would benefit from.

He loved the idea of keeping a record of his achievements, whilst discussing and building on exercises that he could do when I wasn't there. He set himself a goal to improve his confidence in standing and gaining strength again. With this personal ambition and focus it meant that when I arrived, Bob felt excited to "fill me in" on his progress.

"I do these exercises when your not here....

They are easy to do and I feel stronger"

"It made me feel tingly, in a good way"

"I was hoping you were going to visit today"

Some of Bob's achievements were:

- Larger range of movement, particularly in his arms.
- Leg strength: introduced resistance-based strength building exercises.
- Improved finger and hand dexterity
- He went from seated exercises to standing exercises
- Improved cardiovascular activity- he had more energy for longer periods of time.
- Confidence improved- he decided to leave the security of his room and took part in the In Mature Dance Companies larger group sessions in the communal living room.
- His mood was positive during our sessions.

The "dance diary" for Bob was a much more fundamental document. It was less about informing relatives or staff on his progress and more personal to him about his achievements and goals.

He would still have an opportunity to converse, as he enjoyed having a conversation with people. The "dance diary" would help him to focus on positive topics and not dwell on topics that were emotionally upsetting. The dancing helped him to build confidence, gain strength and gave him a new sense of purpose. He became happier, stronger and more positive throughout the project.

Conclusion

The "dance diaries" have had a number of benefits that directly impacted the participant, but also indirectly via the participants support network.

During the project I observed the importance of introducing family and staff to learn dance-based tasks during the group sessions. I invited them to join in which helped them to re-connect with the participant. They developed a deeper and more meaningful relationship through the use of touch, music and movement. It also meant that once the project had come to an end, the support network had the tools to continue with the dance-based tasks from the group sessions.

With the one-to-ones- there wasn't this same opportunity. Communication was missing and break through moments were often lost. The "dance diary" was one way of recording these moments, giving suggestions on how to reconnect with the participant.

I was aware that care workers time can be very limited with each participant. With dementia patients, the ability to communicate quickly can be challenging and staff can often miss subtle signs that requires patience and time to observe. With the one-to-ones I had time to understand and learn about the participant in detail. The care staff could use the information from the "dance diary" to inform how they connect with each participant during day to day activities. For example, If the diary mentioned that a participant loved to sing "Edelweiss" the care staff could potentially play this song and sing with them whilst helping them get dressed in the morning. This could be introduced as part of the participants care package.

The "dance diaries" were also a helpful tool on observing patterns of behaviour and raising any issues of concern. This could have been an observation of low mood or them struggling with a physical pain. Passing this information on to staff and family would be valuable to further assist in recovery and their care. Any issues that were disclosed were written in the diary (with consent from the participant) as well as verbally passed on to the project-coordinator from the care home.

The one-to-one sessions were designed to connect and combat loneliness with the most vulnerable participants living in care homes. Participants who lacked the physical and emotional ability to leave their room, who may rarely have the opportunity to connect with other people and who could be at the risk of living in isolation. These dance sessions with the help of the "dance diaries" gave an opportunity to:

- Improve physical and mental wellbeing
- Inspire using movement, music and touch
- Improve communication for the whole support network
- Re-connect and build relationships
- Introduce personal goals and ambitions
- Introduce a person-centred care package into their daily routine
- offer them an opportunity to develop and grow.

If the "dance diaries" could be integrated into every patients care package, they would have the potential to enrich the lives of some of the most vulnerable people living in our society.