

MONTESSORI FOR DEMENTIA, DISABILITY AND AGEING

ROLES



Following are guidelines for creating roles for people to provide purpose and maintain a sense of contribution.

Roles are activities or tasks that a person does to contribute to the well-being of others. People are able to fill roles wherever they live or spend time. This could be a care community, a day centre, an acute hospital, group home or community centre.

All people need to have a reason to get out of bed every day. Maria Montessori said:

“Joy, feeling one’s own value, being appreciated and loved by others, feeling useful and capable of production are all factors of enormous value for the human soul”.

Roles often involve tasks that are familiar to the person - things they have done many times throughout their lives and therefore are part of procedural memory which is a strength in people living with dementia. Roles are important for self-esteem, and they fill the persons day with purpose.

There are many roles that a person can fill – sometimes the only barrier to them having these roles are the attitudes of care partners both personal and professional. Often people are not given the opportunity to engage in roles as they are considered incapable due to their dementia. This is far from the truth. If we give people opportunity and appropriate supports many people can engage in activities that provide them will fulfilment and provide a sense of purpose and engagement.

When setting up a role for a person it is important to look at their likes and interests as these may guide the type of role the person may enjoy doing. For example, a person who was always an avid gardener may enjoy the role of watering, wedding the garden or sweeping the leaves.

It is important that the person is set up for success. Might they need some signage or some environmental modification such as lowering the height or location of the garden tap? The role also needs to fit in with the person’s usual daily schedule. For example, the role of setting the breakfast table in the morning is not a good role for a person who sleeps late every day. It is not person-centred to wake that person up because the breakfast table needs setting.

There are many possible roles:

- Activity leader
- Reading of daily lunch menu
- Gardener
- Joke of the day teller
- Activity and special occasion announcer (birthdays)
- Folding newsletters
- Stamping envelopes

- Buttering bread
- Making sandwiches
- Preparing fruit and veg
- Flower arranging
- Folding serviettes/towels/clothes
- Washing up
- Making morning tea
- Serving tea/coffee
- Happy hour host, drinks waiter
- Social organiser (using the PA to announce daily events)
- Delivering or collecting the mail
- Daily update of Orientation Board
- Walking the dog or other pet care
- Sweeping the paths

The most important thing to remember is that the role needs to be enjoyable for the person and not a chore they feel they 'have' to do.



Video: [Montessori Roles in an Aged Care Service](#)

Montessori for Dementia, Disability and Ageing

Visit our website to find out more about supporting well-being through the four **Key Principles** of Montessori for Dementia, Disability and Ageing: Self-Esteem, Independence, Choice and Meaningful Engagement. Each **Key Principle** is outlined with **Essential Elements** and then has detailed **Guidelines** to assist with implementing these principles within home and care settings.



Website: Information and resource for [Guideline: Roles](#)