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What can make life with dementia better? A course that offers friendship, sharing and a fresh perspective

Receiving a diagnosis of dementia can be scary. A lot of different services and professionals can be involved in breaking the news. But what then?

In the months following a diagnosis, people can face uncertainties, with nagging questions and no obvious place to go for answers.



The Good Life course

The Good Life course was designed with people with dementia for people with dementia. **It is a weekly course where people with dementia can talk about their experiences and support each other to live as well as they can.** People with dementia who have been learners on one course can be peer-tutors on the next,

with the help of a professional facilitator. Family carers usually don't attend the course, but they are encouraged to socialise while the course sessions are running.

"It's a scary thing to start with, but come on those courses and you won't be scared for much longer. You'll know what it's all about, and you'll have a different attitude towards it and take a different approach with it."

Peer-tutor with dementia on the Good Life course

Research about the Good Life course:

The University of York has been working in partnership with people with dementia, community groups and other service providers to learn more about the Good Life course.

Together they carried out research in 2023 to understand how and in what situations a course like this could help people living with dementia.



Researching a Good Life
with Dementia



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A Good Life
with Dementia



Innovations
in Dementia



Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys
NHS Foundation Trust



Meri Yaadain
BAME Dementia

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What we learnt about the Good Life course

People with dementia on the Good Life course told us they:

- Felt seen, valued, and valuable.
- Gained confidence and built social connections.
- Felt more able to face the challenges dementia presents in future.

People with dementia achieved this by:

- Sharing experiences in a safe space and realising they were not alone.
- Getting relevant advice informed by each other's real experiences.
- Being supported to take an active role in helping each other.
- Enjoying spending time in a friendly group, focusing on what can be achieved.

People from South Asian communities told us that:

- Culture and community are important and can affect how people experience dementia.
- But people from different communities can build connections through shared experience.
- Opportunities to learn about living with dementia from others with shared experience are welcome.
- The important thing is to create a safe space.



“...you want people to understand, because even though dementia might look the same, it's experienced differently in different communities, and I think there's not much around that. Just feeling like you're not being judged, and do you have a safe space to go to.” (Focus group 2)

Things to be aware of:

- Not everyone wants to share experiences or talk about dementia – that's ok.
- The Good Life course isn't available everywhere, but peer-support groups operate nationally through DEEP www.dementiavoices.org.uk/deep-groups

Images care of the Centre for Ageing Better www.agewithoutlimits.org/image-library

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