

WHY VISIT AN LGBT+ PERSON LIVING WITH DEMENTIA?

Understanding why it's important to visit people living with dementia can help motivate you to visit, even if you have never met someone living with dementia before and feel uncertain or unsure.

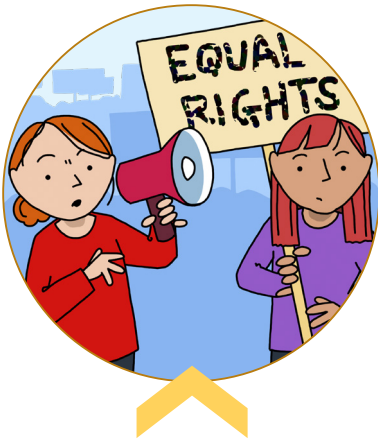


WHY SHOULD I VISIT AN LGBT+ PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA?

LGBT+ older people are more likely to be isolated than their peers and living with dementia compounds this isolation further.



People living with dementia need more support to connect with community. Visiting an LGBT+ person living with dementia can provide an essential bridge for that person to maintain connection to LGBT+ communities.



LGBT+ older people are the elders of the LGBT+ community. Throughout their lives they may have been involved in fighting for LGBT+ rights and creating social change. Connecting with them is a way to pay respect for their advocacy, and learn about shared histories.

Dementia is a leading disability related to ageing. Because of the discrimination they have experienced throughout their lives, older LGBT+ people are at higher risk of cognitive impairment.

Connecting with people living with dementia can be fun. Often people living with dementia have fewer inhibitions and are less concerned with social norms or expectations. This means that you can connect with people living with dementia in different ways that take you to new places.

“This is the time when I could actually give back into the community, get out in amongst it, support people who had needs.”

Simon

WHY DO GENDER AND/OR SEXUALITY DIVERSE PEOPLE NEED TO VISIT LGBT+ OLDER PEOPLE IN PARTICULAR?

LGBT+ people may not have strong links to family or community. This is true of the person receiving the visits and the person visiting. Connecting through visiting provides a wonderful pathway for intergenerational friendship, support and understanding.

LGBT+ older people living with dementia are likely to be living in residential aged care environments that are heteronormative and cisgenderist. They may not feel comfortable to be 'out' in these environments. The care staff and people surrounding them may not have the knowledge or skills to affirm their gender and/or sexuality.



People living with dementia often have trouble remembering recent events and can have difficulty finding the right words to communicate.

Don't let that scare you. It can be deeply satisfying, creative and fulfilling to connect with someone in ways that don't require memory or speech. It can be life affirming to understand the potential of different kinds of relationships, where friendship and companionship does not involve the same kinds of reciprocal verbal communication that you may be used to.



Food, music, art, touch and other multisensory methods can provide meaningful connection with someone.



Shared experiences create better connections. As a member of the LGBT+ community there is shared history and culture. Some other things that we share might include – what we love, how we create pride and obstacles we face. All of these are valuable when it comes to connecting LGBT+ folks living with dementia with their sense of self and community.

“Like many queer people, being disconnected from family is a real thing... and it just occurred to me that if I was feeling like this at my phase in life ... imagine people that were queer, that had been disconnected from family through homophobia or whatever, who are now alone and potentially no friends and no family. And so that’s what got me into it.”

Frankie

NOTES

GETTING MORE INSIGHT

These videos were made with gender and/or sexuality diverse visitors and people living with dementia about their visiting experience. They provide some great insights into the benefits of visiting.

- ABC Life Video
<https://www.facebook.com/ABCTV/videos/369350130650884>)
- International Volunteer Day video, Dept Health and Aged Care:
https://www.facebook.com/healthgovau/videos/874660889879243/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-IOS_GK0T-GK1C&mibextid=v7YzmG

Explaining LGBT+ Acronym

In these resources we use the acronym LGBT+ to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. We acknowledge that gender and/or sexuality diversity encompasses a greater range of forms and expressions of diversity than can be captured in the LGBT+ acronym.

We nonetheless have chosen to use this acronym in this resource because there is no published peer-reviewed research currently available on the experiences of intersex or asexual people living with dementia.

While these resources may be useful for broader communities, they have only been informed by our own research and that of others documenting the experiences of people living with dementia who identify as LGBT+. We also do not use the word 'queer', because it remains a complex and potentially hurtful term for many older LGBT+ people, because of its historic use as a demeaning slur.

Co-design process

The development of this resource was led by Dr. Louisa Smith at Deakin University. This resource was co-designed with six people who had visited LGBT+ people living with dementia over an extended period of time.

A Reference Group was also consulted at each step of the co-design process, providing input into the resources.

The Reference Group included LGBT+ people living with dementia and their carers and representatives from LGBTQIA+ organisations and dementia care organisations.

We are incredibly grateful for the generosity and time of all those involved in this process.



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