

Interdisciplinary Psychosocial Sensory Interventions for Bedbound and Non-verbally Communicative Persons in the Long Term Care Setting in Singapore (HERE Together) Ren Ci Hospital

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Introduction/Background

- HERE Together stands for **H**ere in the present **E**mbracing connections, **R**econnecting with our identities and **E**xperiencing life Together.
- A multidisciplinary team from the Psychosocial Services Department, consisting medical social workers, art therapists and music therapists, developed a multi-dimensional care program that consists of psychosocial, sensory and spiritual components to involve families in enhancing the quality of life for persons with advanced-stage conditions or those who are no longer verbally communicative. Each session centers around one's personhood and aims to bring out residents' capacities by personalizing experiences to reconnect with their identities. According to residents' background, they are invited to connect with familiar rituals and customs through simple and familiar materials in a storytelling format.



During Chinese New Year and Hari Raya, Chinese residents will exchange greetings with oranges, have lion dance to rid the bad and bring in new hopes with tossing while Muslim residents will seek forgiveness with green packets and interact with spices as they prepare dishes.



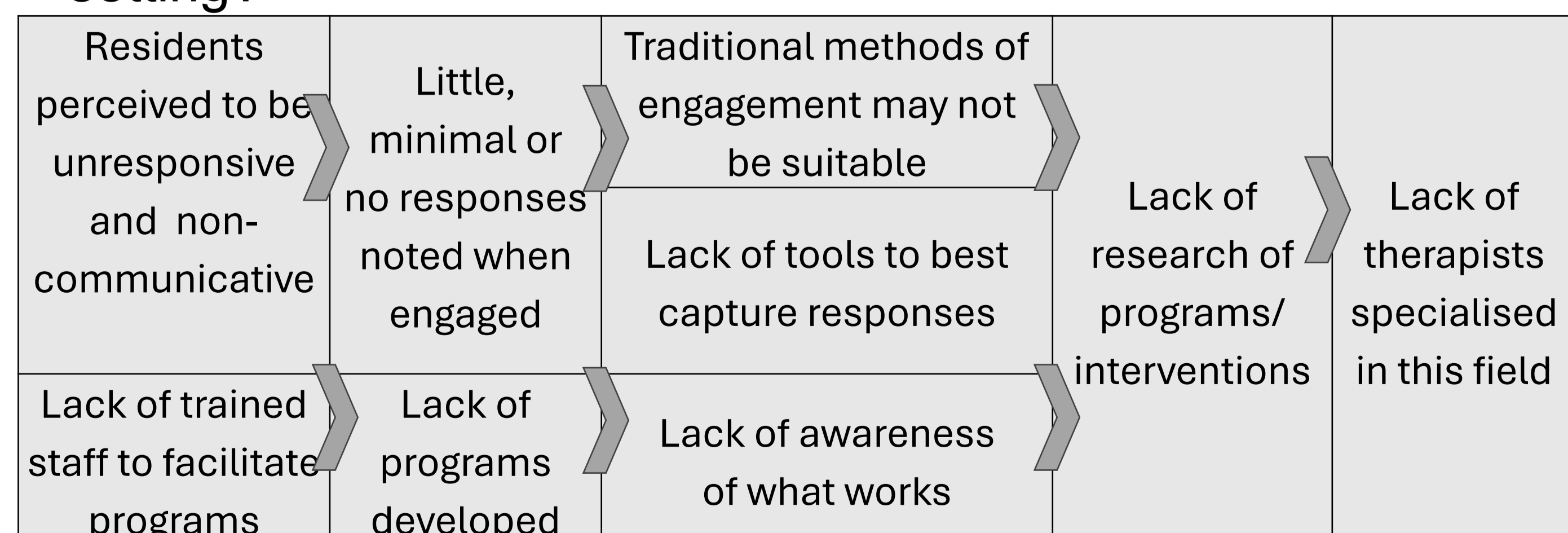
During Vesak Day, Buddhists residents are invited to pour water over baby Buddha to seek forgiveness, be blessed by scented holy water and hear the singing bowl as prayers are offered up for blessings.

Goal/Objective

- Participants to experience opportunities for self-expression and meaningful interactions with families, facilitators and materials through their senses
- Participants to reminisce significant events, connect with their personhood and identity to promote their well-being
- Participants to have increased arousal and attention as experiences are tailored to sensory and cognitive needs
- Participants will experience a 15-30 minutes sensory engagement, paired with familiar pictures, music, scents, textures, and tastes to affirm one's cultural identity

Problem Analysis (Design Thinking & 5 Whys)

- How might we statement: How can we meaningful engage and support the overall well-being of non-verbally communicative and bedbound persons in the long term care setting?



- **Root Cause:** Lack of meaningful programs to support the well-being of bedbound and non-verbally communicative persons due to knowledge and research gaps of effective interventions and appropriate measures, and therapists equipped to develop such interventions.

Implementation Plan

- This story was shared in individual and group settings, with careful consideration of residents' capacities and sensory needs.
- Simple, structured and familiar items for multi-sensory engagement and adaptations for inclusive engagement were curated after discussions with families on what residents are familiar with.
- Observations were recorded using the modified Music Therapy Assessment Tool for Awareness in Disorders of Consciousness scale, assessing visual and attention capacities, awareness of activity and non-verbal communication.
- Qualitative content analysis was used to retrospectively study the team's process of creating the sensory story and feedback from facilitators and family members.



Benefits/Results



98% of families, staffs & volunteers were satisfied



72 residents



15 family members







20 volunteers



20 staff

- The program is a meaningful and flexible space to cater to residents' sensory and communication needs in a culturally congruent and person-centred approach. The slowed pace of interaction, intentional stimulation and individualised approach fostered a greater sense of 'being with' residents while the enhanced respect of residents' dignity flowed into daily care as staff better understood residents' preferences.

Residents	Family Members	Facilitators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Increased arousal and awareness > Increase in non-verbal behaviours to connect through eye and physical movement, and emotional behaviours > Experience individualized interaction for self-expression, and meaningful interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Deeper connection with loved one > Feel empowered to continue connecting with loved ones > Involvement in care and tangible way to spend quality time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Alternative way of care that focuses on meaningful engagement, expression, comfort and identities > Attuned to subtle changes and curiosity to try ways for better engagement > Better understanding of residents' responses to inform daily care

Sustainability & Reflections

- HERE Together honours the unique narratives of residents. The multi-sensory approach offered opportunities for residents with sensory and communication barriers to reconnect with themselves, others and the environment, thereby strengthening relationships.
- There is Always a Way to Connect. Through a gentle loving approach and tailoring engagements to each residents' capacities, we learnt how each resident communicates, sense their world, and communicated to residents that they matter and they are not alone.

"Our senses is the gateway to the outside world and our ability to experience our existence through our senses." – Virginia Satir