

NEW WORKSHOP TO REVOLUTIONISE DEMENTIA CARE IN THE UK

A new workshop titled Introduction to Applied Improvisation within Dementia Care is set to make waves in the UK. Created by Alan Boulter, a former stage manager turned dementia care champion, this workshop introduces innovative improvisation techniques to caregivers, offering a fresh approach to person-centred care for individuals living with dementia.

The workshop, already trialled with great success at the Old Vicarage Care Home in Moulsoford, Oxfordshire, aims to expand across the UK and beyond, offering carers – both professional and non-professional – tools to connect more effectively with those living with dementia. The unique approach is designed to empower carers with skills that reduce anxiety, foster better communication, and improve the overall wellbeing of individuals with dementia.

Go With the Flow – Connecting Through Creativity

The workshop is part of a larger initiative under the umbrella of Go With The Flow – Connecting Through Creativity, a project aimed at integrating creativity into dementia care practices. This initiative is the brainchild of Alan Boulter, who, after a 20-year career working on major theatre productions like Disney's *The Lion King* and *Jersey Boys*, transitioned into the care sector. Boulter, inspired by his personal experiences and professional training, completed dementia champion training at the University of Worcester in 2024. His vision combines his background in performance and improvisation with the skills and knowledge gained in dementia care.

Boulter said: "I realised that there was a significant gap in the way dementia care is approached, particularly in the use of creative techniques. Improvisation has been used successfully in training doctors and GPs within the NHS, but it is still almost unheard of in dementia care settings. Integrating improvisation means we're able to create more engaging, person-centred care experiences."



Why Improvisation?

Improvisation is a technique that encourages flexibility, creativity, and adaptability – all crucial skills when caring for someone living with dementia. The principles of improvisation include listening, responding in the moment, and building on what others say and do. When applied to dementia care, these techniques help caregivers stay present and responsive to the changing needs of the individuals in their care.

Through this workshop, participants learn how to use improvisation to:

- Create another avenue of communication for individuals who may struggle with verbal expression.
- Reduce anxiety and agitation by offering a more flexible, responsive approach to care.
- Improve mood and general wellbeing by making interactions more engaging and less stressful.
- Ensure that individuals stay connected to their surroundings, helping prevent feelings of isolation.

Workshop Success and Expansion Plans

The first trial of the workshop at the Old Vicarage Care Home was met with enthusiastic feedback from care professionals. One anonymous participant stated: "The workshop was eye-opening. It gave me a new way to connect with residents, and I could

see how it immediately impacted their mood and engagement. I feel much more equipped to handle challenging situations now."

Building on this success, Boulter aims to offer the workshop to care homes, hospitals, dementia support groups, and charities throughout the UK. His goal is to create a national movement in dementia care that shifts the focus towards creative, person-centred approaches.

Bringing Awareness and Support for Dementia Care Innovation

This workshop arrives at a crucial time for dementia care in the UK, where it is estimated that over 900,000 people are currently living with the condition. The demand for innovative, compassionate care strategies has never been higher. Through media outreach and partnerships with universities, dementia charities, and healthcare providers, Go With The Flow – Connecting Through Creativity seeks to bring awareness to these new training techniques and their potential to transform dementia care. Workshops like this are part of a larger effort to improve the quality of life for individuals living with dementia and to equip carers with the skills they need to provide high-quality, compassionate care. This initiative aligns with broader healthcare goals to enhance dementia care, particularly in light of the growing ageing population in the UK.

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