Dangling conversations: stories of dementia

Møte med minner
Meeting memories conference

10th December 2012 Oslo City Museum

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Pilgrim Projects/Patient Voices

Forgetting

‘You’re a stranger now unto me
Lost in the dangling conversation
And the superficial sighs,
In the borders of our lives.’

Paul Simon

Remembering

‘Remembering is not the negative of forgetting. Remembering is a form of forgetting.’

Kundera, 1995

The pasts we tell ourselves

‘An important challenge to humanity is to recognise that lives are the pasts we tell ourselves.’

Ochs and Capps, 1996

‘Stories are always true…’

‘While telling surely assists the construction of a tale, the tale necessarily lies beyond the telling.’

Young 1987, cited in Ochs and Capp, 1996

Creating ourselves

‘Narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created.’

Morrison, 1994
Eva’s story

From darkness into light: new worlds

[Link to story: www.patientvoices.org.uk/flv/0345pv384.htm]

A ‘typical’ Patient Voices workshop

1. Introductions
2. Seven elements of digital storytelling
3. Story circle
4. Script development
5. Image editing tutorial
6. Recording the voiceover
7. Storyboarding
8. Video editing tutorial
9. Assembling the video
10. Premier of stories
11. Debrief and reflection

A typical Patient Voices workshop

- 7-10 storytellers
- 2-3 facilitators
- 2-3 days
- 7-10 stories

Dangling conversations workshop

- 8 storytellers
- 4 facilitators
- 4 days (8 half-days)
- 8 stories
Preparation
- Facilitator induction
- Storyteller briefing session
- Liaison with Dementia Centre
- Liaison with carers
- Collecting photos
- Alleviating anxiety!

Prompt: Who are you?
Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures,
a sift of lost faces
to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments--
snapped before I budded --
leaf-fall from the family tree.
*Where I’m from* by George Ella Lyon

Making (sense of) stories
‘If you never get to the end, how do you
know what the story is?
‘I try to make the best of things.’
‘Is emotion the glue that holds the story
together?’
‘Remember to breathe.’

Rob’s story
It’s a different world
www.patientvoices.org.uk/flv/0551pv384.htm

‘You’ve made my day!’

Developing the stories
- 1-1 facilitation
- Chauffeur rather than coach
- Individual approaches to
  - prompts
  - scripts
  - photos
  - recording
Adaptations

Finding (and holding!) a story
Looking through photos
Finding memories
Harnessing memories
Scripting
Recording
Working together
Reviewing

Recording strategies

All scripts were printed out in a large sans-serif font.
For Storyteller A, the script was printed out and then cut into strips of paper, each with a single line of text.
For Storyteller B, recording was done one paragraph or sentence at a time, with opportunities to review and re-record each sentence.
For Storyteller C, the script was printed very large.
For Storyteller D, the facilitator created a series of ‘prompts’ from which the storyteller could recount the story.

Strategy for Storyteller A

Gerry’s story

It’s the art

www.patientvoices.org.uk/flv/0550pv384.htm

‘Not being on your own, that’s the thing.’
What storytellers said

‘It’s been great.’
‘I feel like me again.’
‘It was brilliant.’
‘Everybody’s story meant so much.’
‘We’ve been learning from each other, and supporting one another.’
‘I’d like to do it again someday.’

Passages past dragons

‘People reach greater maturity as they find the freedom to be themselves and to claim, accept and love their own personal story, with all its brokenness and its beauty.’

Jean Vanier

Storytellers

‘In my end is my beginning’

‘Each affects the other and the other affects the next, and the world is full of stories, but the stories are all one.’

Mitch Albom

Dangling conversations

All the Dangling conversations stories can be seen at

www.patientvoices.org.uk/dc.htm

Thank you

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References

Young, KG. 1987. Taleworlds and Story Realms: the phenomenology of Narrative. Dordrecht: Nijhoff