

# Proposal For Training Programme

Serge Walberg

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*"Most human satisfactions are associated with other human beings; therefore social and interpersonal relationships are especially significant for the human pursuit of happiness. What may be less obvious is precisely how to achieve satisfaction in interpersonal relationships."*  
James Schellenberg<sup>1</sup> (1970).

## 1. INTRODUCTION



**The Carers Association, WA**, is a federally funded support network for people dispensing home care to elderly, handicapped, or ailing people in need of regular medical attention. It is resourced by volunteer carers, (usually a family member or friend), who may not have been trained in interpersonal skills. The purpose of this report is to propose a training program for both home carers and the association's administrative personnel, which would improve interaction between individuals, increase the efficiency of the association and enrich the service provided to clients.

An analysis of the specific needs and requirements of the association is used as the basis for designing the structure of the training program, which would be provided as a free service by **Carers WA**.

We all have a capacity for being "*more understanding, respectful, warm, genuine, open direct, and concrete*" says George Gazda<sup>2</sup>; with effective training, a sound body of knowledge, and appropriate models "*the process of becoming more fully human can greatly be accelerated.*" It is intended to demonstrate here that the implementation of such training will improve the efficiency, productivity and effectiveness of the activities conducted by Carers WA.

## 2. NEEDS ANALYSIS

### 1. Overview of Activities

There are nearly 2 million unpaid carers in Australia, of which 150,000 live in WA. The association's purpose is to actively enhance the quality of life of WA carers by creating a support network which provides information, help and training in active partnership with government, service providers and the community.

In order to maximise the benefit derived from the limited resources available to **Carers WA**, it is projected to develop a training program in interpersonal skills that will facilitate the activities of individual carers and of the association.

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<sup>1</sup> Schellenberg, J. (1970). Social Psychology. New York: Random House.

<sup>2</sup> Gazda, G. (1973). Human Relations Development: A Manual for Educators. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Carers attend to the physical, hygienic, medical and domestic needs of persons unable (for medical or age reasons) to be fully self-reliant.

## **2. Purpose and Primary Objectives of Proposed Program**

By training home carers in the correct techniques of conducting interpersonal relations, the quality of life of both the *carers* and the *cared-for* can be considerably improved. Carers and their patients live in close proximity for prolonged periods of time, (sometimes a lifetime) which results in the understandable occasional occurrence of tensions, frustration, anxiety and anger.

Furthermore, the fact that patients are dependent on carers for their everyday existence can create a one-way relationship that is irritating to the carer, and frustrating for the patient. Issues relating to trust and communication are of vital importance to the successful development of this very special type of relationship.

Finally, administrative staff employed at the association's offices is required to provide moral and informational support to individual carers. This involves daily counselling, reassuring and informing, by telephone, mail, or face-to-face interviews. These relations can also generate tension and will therefore be improved by the proposed program, thus making the association's operations more efficient and cost-effective.

The objectives of the proposed program are to foster caring and productive relations by developing skills that would ensure the following<sup>3</sup>:

- knowing and trusting each other
- communicating accurately and clearly
- accepting and supporting each other
- resolving conflicts and relationship problems constructively

## **3. Potential benefits**

The potential benefits to the association are huge. According to Robert Bolton<sup>4</sup>, 80% of people who fail at their job do so because they "*do not relate well to other people*". Productivity, he argues is greatly enhanced by the ability to communicate well. In few other areas of activity is this truer than in that of home-care.

The improved relations between carers and patients will reduce the volume of counselling required from the association's personnel, allowing human resources to be redirected to other activities.

Successful performance of home-care will also increase public acceptance of and support for the activities of the association, resulting in positive public relations, an enlarged client base, and increased public funding.

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<sup>3</sup> Johnson, D. (1972). Reaching Out. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. *Quoted by Karen Upton-Davis*

<sup>4</sup> Bolton, R. (1987). People Skills. NSW: Simon & Schuster.

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF TRAINING PROGRAM

#### 1. *Structure of training program*

The training program will be structured as a series of 5 group seminars, to be attended by individual home-carers as well as all **Carers WA** personnel who are engaged in client contact during the normal course of their work, either by phone, mail, or face-to-face.

The sessions will be 3 hours long each, and will consist of a lecture (supported by printed handouts), followed by group activities and exercises aimed at illustrating the instructional content of the lecture. Finally, participants will be invited to join in an open forum or debate and discussion.

A small amount of preparatory reading will be required before each session, and a summative assessment of the instructional outcome of the course will be conducted by means of a journal, to be kept and completed by each participant.

#### 2. *Skills required to be developed*

- Listening skills
- Assertion skills
- Anger, stress management and
- Conflict resolution

#### i) Listening skills

*"A friend who takes the trouble to listen to us as we consider our problems, can change our whole outlook on the world."*

Dr Elton Mayo (1957).<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the most valuable of the skills presented below, *listening* will be analysed in some detail. Receiving skills involve giving feedback in ways that aid continued communication. This involves 2 basic parts<sup>6</sup>:

- Communicating the intention of wanting to understand the feelings of the sender
- Understanding and interpreting the sender's ideas and feelings

The subject of *receiving messages effectively* will be extensively investigated and discussed. Listening is the activity most of us spend the largest part of our time involved in. For this reason, getting the right message is vitally important.

Conducting a perception check of the other person's feelings is essential, and can be done using 3 important techniques:

1. *Reflecting for feelings*: Before responding it is important to know how accurate my perception is of the sender's feelings. I can do this using a 3-part perception check::
  - I describe what I think the other person's feelings are
  - I ask if my perception is correct

<sup>5</sup> Mayo, E. (1957). *Quoted in Nichols & Stevens: Are You Listening.* New York: Harper & Row

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, D. (1972). *Reaching Out.* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. *Quoted by Karen Upton-Davis*

- I express neither approval nor disapproval of the feelings  
Skilful listening also involves observing and interpreting the sender's body language, and commenting on the interpretation (eg "*You seem distressed. Am I right?*").
2. *Reflecting for content: Paraphrasing* is the best way of doing this. It is good to paraphrase the sender's message using fresh words, and emphasising keywords. This should be done accurately and non-evaluatively, avoiding a judgemental response, and neither adding nor subtracting but reflecting the essentials of the sender's message.
  3. *Reflecting for meaning*: It is important to *negotiate* the meaning of statements made. This is because people do not all use words in the same way, and this can lead to misinterpreting a vital message. For this reason paraphrasing may be ineffective in some cases and it is important to interpret correctly. A good formula, according to Robert Bolton<sup>7</sup> is: "*What I think you're saying is...*"

Effective listening skills also involve the expert interpretation and use of **body language**, or non-verbal communication. This is important in 2 ways:

- Interpreting the body language of the person being listened to, in order to accurately reflect for feeling
- Displaying appropriate body language while listening, in order to reassure the sender of our best attention

There are **12 "roadblocks"** to effective communication, according to Bolton, and it is important to understand and remember these if we are to improve our listening skills; they are:

- |  |   |                                     |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Criticising                         | } | <b>Judging</b>                      |
| 2. Name-calling                        |   |                                     |
| 3. Diagnosing                          |   |                                     |
| 4. Praising evaluatively               |   |                                     |
| 5. Ordering                            | } | <b>Sending solutions</b>            |
| 6. Threatening                         |   |                                     |
| 7. Moralising                          |   |                                     |
| 8. Excessive/inappropriate questioning |   |                                     |
| 9. Advising                            |   |                                     |
| 10. Diverting                          | } | <b>Avoiding the other's concern</b> |
| 11. Logical argument                   |   |                                     |
| 12. Reassuring                         |   |                                     |

'*Body Language*' and the '*12 Roadblocks*' will be discussed and explained extensively in the course of the training program (see Session 2).

<sup>7</sup> Bolton, R. (1987). People Skills. NSW: Simon & Schuster.

## ii) Assertion skills

Many of us are unable to say "no" in situations where we would like to. At other times we may make our demands in an aggressive, accusing or intimidating way. This will rarely achieve the change in behaviour we want from the other person, and hence good assertion skills are fundamental to any interpersonal relationship. Effective assertion statements contain 3 parts<sup>8</sup>:

- A non-judgmental description of the behaviour to be changed
- A disclosure of the asserter's feelings
- A clarification of the concrete and tangible effect of the other person's behaviour on the asserter

An example of a good assertion message would be: "*when you.../feel...because...*" It must contain only a concrete description of observable behaviour, without drawing inferences, accusing or insulting the other, and be free of sarcasm, generalisations, exaggeration, profanity or absolutes.

The assertive statement can then be pursued with "push-backs" aimed at restating the assertion and avoiding being sidetracked to another argument. Tone of voice can be firmer during "push-backs", which must be spaced with periods of silence and reflective listening to allow the other person to respond.

According to Robert Bolton, the effectiveness of the assertion statement can be considerably improved by observing the following rules when delivering an assertion message:

- Assert to the right person
- Convene a mutually acceptable time to talk
- Be brief
- Deliver the assertive message early in the interaction
- Attend well
- Make your body language congruent with your verbal message
- Treat the other with respect
- Avoid answering questions while asserting
- Deal with tears by reflecting the sadness, then proceed with assertion
- Deal with withdrawal/silence by saying you assume the silence is an agreement to change
- Look for any hint of an offered solution
- Be persistent

Finally, if agreement to change behaviour is reached, allow the other to retain his dignity. The point is not to get revenge or to "win" an argument, but to achieve that change of behaviour. To end the assertion session:

- Make sure the solution meets your needs
- Paraphrase the solution back to the other
- Say "thanks"
- Arrange a time to check if the solution is working

In the particular situation of **Carers WA**, where home-carers are required to be assertive in their relationships with patients, these skills will be especially useful.

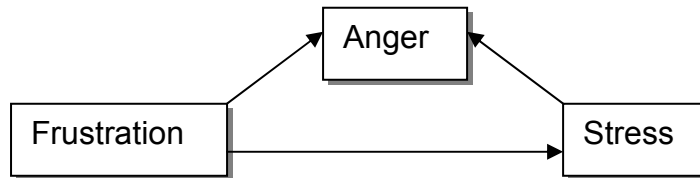
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<sup>8</sup> Bolton, R. (1987). People Skills. NSW: Simon & Schuster.

### iii) Anger, stress management

*"Anger is the emotional arousal that occurs whenever we experience frustration. The more intense the frustration, the greater the anger."*  
James Schellenberg (1970)<sup>9</sup>.

Anger and stress are closely related. When others create stress in my life I feel angry.



Anger results from 4 main causes:

- a defense against something
- not getting what we want
- frustrated, thwarted or attacked
- a sense of righteousness at being abused by others

We often feel righteous about our anger, and that the other person has acted unjustly or wrongly. It is important to remember this when managing our anger.

The results of anger can be destructive or constructive. Or it can be repressed, resulting in even more frustration and anger. Effective management of stress and anger can have a substantial impact on the quality of interpersonal relations, and it is therefore important to observe the rules for managing anger constructively.

These rules include:

- Recognise your anger, acknowledge it and own it
- Decide whether or not you wish to be angry
- Use alternative responses to provocation
- Express anger directly and effectively when appropriate, in a way that terminates it and gets it over
- Ask for clarification before responding to aggression or provocation
- Address the right person, at the right time, in the right place, and make your words to the point, avoiding generalisations
- Remember that anger can make you impulsive and irrational, and factor this knowledge in how you decide to behave
- The prime objective is always to obtain a constructive outcome, not to punish or take revenge
- Consider the impact of your anger on the other person, and allow him the opportunity to respond (don't "Hit and run")
- Express positive feelings as well as your anger
- Express your anger indirectly, when unavoidable:
  - Physical exercise
  - Express your feelings in private (shout, cry, swear, etc.)
  - Resolve the situation in your own mind by accepting it

<sup>9</sup> Schellenberg, J. (1970). Social Psychology. New York: Random House.

Stress and anger can be managed effectively through social support systems, and when appropriate they should be utilised.

#### iv) Conflict resolution

This is a crucial skill in a relationship where people live in close physical proximity, and it is therefore important to adopt the correct strategies for entering into confrontation. These will depend on a number of factors, the first of which is whether the outcome of the conflict is more important than the survival of the relationship with the other person.

David Johnson<sup>10</sup> suggests the following procedures for resolving conflict:

- Clarify my goals vs. my attachment to the relationship
- I am aware of my usual attitude to conflict, and I correct errors
- I define the conflict by:
  - Describing the other's actions without labeling or accusing
  - Defining the conflict as a mutual problem to be solved, not a desire to win
  - Defining the problem in the most limited, specific way
  - Describing my feelings to the other's actions
  - Identifying parts of my behaviour that are contributing to the conflict
- I confront the other person in the following manner:
  - I do it at a time and place that is convenient to both, and I allow the other the chance to respond
  - I freely express my perceptions, focusing on issues not personalities
  - I express my understanding of the other's views
  - I do not demand that the person change
- I arrive at a mutual definition of the conflict
- I communicate any changes in my position or feelings, as well as my desire to resolve the conflict
- I make sure I understand the other's perspective fully
- I indicate the advantages of ending the conflict, and the costs of continuing it
- I make sure the outcome is mutually acceptable, and I clearly specify:
  - The agreement
  - The ways in which we shall each modify our behaviour
  - The ways for restoring cooperation in the event of a relapse
  - Plan follow-up meetings to ensure the agreement is working

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<sup>10</sup> Johnson, D. (1972). Reaching Out. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. *Quoted by Karen Upton-Davis*

## 4. SESSION CONTENT

The instructional content of the 5 sessions will reflect the need to develop the 4 skills described above. The format and procedure of all sessions will be roughly similar, and will be conducted by the same facilitator/instructor.

### **Session 1**

1. Introduction to the course
2. Introduction to interpersonal skills
3. Trust and good communications
4. Empathy
5. Relationship statements
6. Group exercises involving trust
7. Debate and discussion

### **Session 2**

8. Listening skills
9. Receiving messages effectively
10. Reflective listening: reflecting for feelings, reflecting for content, reflecting for meaning
11. Feedback
12. The 12 roadblocks to effective communication
13. Attending skills
14. Receiving messages effectively
15. Body language and non-verbal communication
16. Group exercises involving non-verbal communication, roadblocks and listening techniques
17. Debate and discussion

### **Session 3**

1. Assertion skills
2. 3-part assertion message
3. "Push/Push-backs"
4. Conflict strategies and personalities: turtle, shark, Teddy bear, fox and owl
5. Group exercises involving assertion skills, push-backs
6. Debate and discussion

### **Session 4**

1. Anger and stress -- managing your feelings
2. Understanding anger
3. Conflict resolution
4. Expressing anger constructively
5. "Defusing the bomb!"
6. Group exercises involving anger
7. Debate and discussion

### **Session 5**

1. Conflict resolution
2. Confrontation and negotiation



3. 3 essentials for effective communication
4. Group exercises involving conflict resolution
5. Summary of entire course
6. Question and answer session
7. Debate and discussion

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The implementation of this training program for the clients and personnel of **Carers WA**, will result in a considerable improvement of their interpersonal relations. Issues such as listening skills, assertion skills, anger and stress management, and constructive conflict resolution are critical to relations between home-carers and their patients. The amelioration of these relations through a better understanding of these issues will not only benefit the association and its federal sponsor, but also the population of home-carers and the patients themselves.

