

London Carers' responses to RYCTT

Ted and Lyn (Husband and wife)

Lyn and I have attended the ten weekly Reminiscence meetings. Lyn says that at the start she was wary, unsure what she was venturing into. Each week focused on a different stage in growing up, starting with where you came from, where your name came from progressing through school days, work ETC. to the present.

Lyn shared her story with the others in the group and with the help of Pam and her team she quickly developed trust and confidence to talk about herself but also to take part in reenactments, unselfconsciously. Lyn says that she would normally have been too shy to participate in these enactments, but she is very clear how much she was enthused and enjoyed these displays. She has since told many people of her and others, role-playing often with much amusement, all round.

Pam's colleagues focused on the theme of the week helping Lyn to flesh out that theme, compiling a scrap book, for example, on her work as a nursery nurse, or her adventures as a member of the local Vespa club.

Wariness has been replaced with eagerness and anticipation, finding the experience enlivening and reaffirming of many events and activities in her life and I would wish that such meetings were on going and more available to others.

After my initial wariness, Lyn's appreciation of the weekly meetings took over.

I would say that for Lyn, exuberance has been evident throughout. Sometimes unable to find the words, she has been able to take part in the charades, illustrating some event in her life, e.g. going on long scooter trips in her 20s, or fishing trips on childhood holidays.

The experience of sharing with the group, 30+, people, and developing a sense of companionship in listening to others, and being listened to when telling events in her life, has been very positive.

For her and others sharing stories of migration, evacuation, sadness and ill health as well as great joys and happiness has given trust and body to this companionship.

The telling, the reliving has been exhilarating for Lyn. Bringing some memories into the present has given her great satisfaction, and other members have spoken of a kind of reawakening of dormant memories and skills at home.

Lyn has found it difficult to talk in the abstract about the experience, becoming distressed at her own 'lost for words' but undoubtedly has relished the experience and it will continue to be part of her imaginative life and an excuse to retell fishing and other stories. We all enthuse at her exuberance.

Maggie and Hermione (friends)

Well two Mondays have come and gone and no group in sight! I really missed them, I don't honestly know if Hermione did or not, she hasn't said and when prompted has been a bit vague about it all. I find that interesting, as she participated so wholeheartedly when in the group.

I absolutely loved them for myself. It's not often you get the chance to wear silly hats, sing or dance and looking round the room see all the others equally daftly attired but such a lot of happy faces. One of the most rewarding things for me was to see a reinvigorated Hermione laughing, taking part and even sometimes initiating actions. It was the old Herm who stood up and proposed a vote of thanks to you. She was always noted for that at family parties.... I was quite stunned by it. It really was as if while there the group tapped into the real Herm who sadly hasn't been seen for some time.

Caring for someone with dementia is a tough old business, as you well know. And I find that I can get so bound up in the minutiae of everyday tasks and responsibilities that I completely overlook the elements that the group supplied...of reawakening the dormant personality...and for that I am most grateful.

One of the very positive elements of the group which makes it so successful is the high ratio of 'helpers' to 'clients'. It helps to make for such a happy cheery atmosphere and the subtle, and sometimes, not so subtle way that the large group was endlessly mixed up. I am really pleased that there will be a new group and was very pleased to get the info from Jill.

Thank you so much for running this superb programme which was not only a joy to be part of but has also given me so many ideas to work on at home.