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Employee Gentleness

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Employee Gentleness

Background

Patients and clients like being treated gently

But little known about employee gentleness

What is employee gentleness?

How is employee gentleness fostered within organisations?

Employee Gentleness

Method

Phase 1: Interview based studies

- Palliative day care centre, 8 palliative care nurses
- Support agency for children and teenagers, 8 case workers

Phase 2 : Ethnographic case studies

- Palliative day care centre & Two care homes
- 100 days of observation
- 2-3 month period each
- 20 Interviews



Employee Gentleness

Method

- ***‘Chain’ care home***
 - Part of national chain (modern building)
 - Higher ratio of staff to patients, high workload
 - 30 Residents/mixed capabilities
- ***‘Seaside’ care home***
 - Single owner (Victorian building)
 - Higher ratio of staff to patients, high workload
 - 20 Residents/mixed capabilities

Employee Gentleness

Findings

Employee gentleness
is a *slow, patient and soft approach* to caregiving
that foregrounds
affective care behaviours (e.g., empathy, emotion regulation)
in combination with
guidance care behaviours that direct the care process and
relational care behaviours that develop and maintain close relationships.

Employee Gentleness

Findings

Employee gentleness is characterised by a *slow, patient and soft* approach

- **Slow pace and rhythm**
 - Actively reducing the pace of care
 - Talking slowly & not rushing through tasks
 - Encouraging clients to take their time
- **Patience**
 - Waiting calmly for client responses & client engagement
- **Softness**
 - Soft voice, warm tones, soft touch & body language

Employee Gentleness

Findings

Therapeutic value of a soft, slow and patient approach

- Signals availability, benevolent intentions
- Demonstrates attentiveness and concern
- Client feels cared for
- Closeness, rapport and patient disclosure
- Encourages client participation in care process

Employee Gentleness

Findings

Employee gentleness foregrounds affective care behaviours

- **Managing client's emotions**
 - Reducing client's negative emotions, promoting positive emotions
 - Reappraisal, distraction, validation strategies
- **Managing own emotions (emotional labour)**
 - Focus to achieve client goals whilst protecting self

Employee Gentleness

Findings

Guidance & Relational Care Behaviours

- **Guidance Care Behaviours**
 - Friendly enquiry
 - Providing Support
- **Relational Care Behaviours**
 - Demonstrating attentiveness, concern and compassion
 - Validation
 - Non-judgemental acceptance
- **‘Navigating’** a course between dominance and passivity, being close and too distant

Employee Gentleness

Findings

Employee gentleness is fostered by a network of practices

- **Cultural and Leadership practices**
 - Value and norm setting: Organisational aims, story telling
 - Motivate and legitimate gentle person-centred approaches to care
- **Care resourcing practices**
 - Recruitment & scheduling
 - Knowledge sharing practices
 - Provide resources that enable employees to be gentle

Employee Gentleness

Findings

Employee gentleness is fostered by a network of practices

- **Job design practices**
 - Job autonomy, social support, participation, low workload
 - Job crafting
 - Motivate, enable and provide the opportunity to be gentle

Employee Gentleness

Background to knowledge in care work

Building up knowledge, and building up power

- **Research**
- **Body as the site of knowledge**
- **“Holistic nursing”**
- **Empowerment**

Employee Gentleness

Findings

Environment of care

- **Social spaces**
 - Chairs, tables
 - Broad ability/desire created to socialise and stay in lounge area
 - Low noise levels
- **Unsocial spaces**
 - Chairs around the corner
 - High noise levels

Employee Gentleness

Findings

Empowerment through space

- **Layout is important for fostering care amongst all “actors” in care homes**
- **Diversity of roles created by geography is an ethical, and ultimately contributes to good quality care homes**

Employee Gentleness

Summary

Employee Gentleness

- Particular form of person-centred caregiving
- Emerges from caregiving process
- Different to related concepts, e.g., compassion, empathy, social support, dignity, respect

Organisational capability for gentleness

- Geography and space
- Roles and blending of roles

Limitations

- Transferability
- Problems of gentleness