



Memories They Can't Be Bought:
Therapeutic Reminiscence & Life Review as
Supportive Nursing Intervention

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Souvenirs

All the snow has turned to water
Christmas days have come and gone
Broken toys and faded colors
Are all that's left to linger on

I hate graveyards and old pawn shops
For they always bring me tears
I can't forgive the way they rob me
Of my childhood souvenirs

Memories they can't be boughten
They can't be won at carnivals for free
Well it took me years
To get those souvenirs
And I don't know how they slipped away from me

Broken hearts and dirty windows
Make life difficult to see
That's why last night and this mornin'
Always look the same to me

I hate reading old love letters
For they always bring me tears
I can't forgive the way they rob me
Of my sweetheart souvenirs

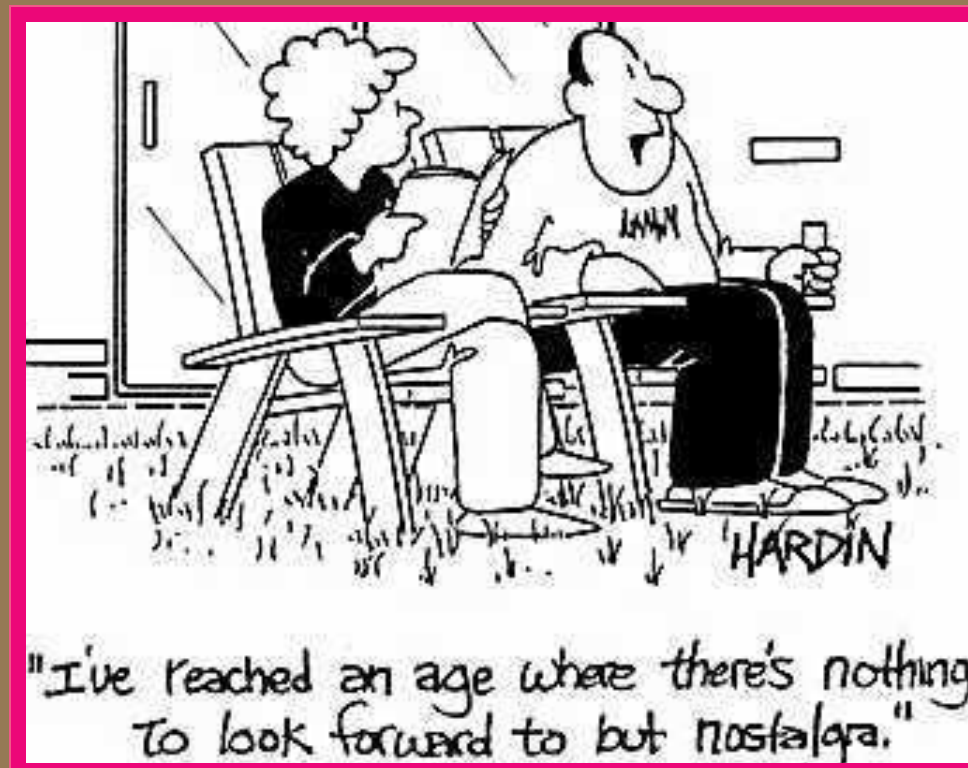


Lyrics: John Prine

Reminiscence

historically considered a sign of “senility”

Old research limited to LTC & reinforced stereotypes of old folks as confused, deluded, ruminating with zero quality of life – their reminiscences “confirmed” their disconnection from reality & that they were living in the past. (Butler, 1963)



Butler's studies of healthy community dwellers ≥ 65
showed them "vibrant"

& life review reminiscing non-pathological:

"...memories, reminiscence, and nostalgia all play a part in the process. Far from living in the past...older people were engaged in the important psychological task of making sense of the life they had lived." (Butler, 1963)



Linus Pauling @ 93

Only person awarded 2 unshared Nobel Prizes: Chemistry '54, Peace '62
Studied, worked, wrote, spoke, taught until the end of his life.



Aging related changes include social, psychological, emotional, & physical arenas

Often needs are greatest when resources are lowest.



Intrinsically therapeutic, life review provides opportunity for self-understanding & various affective, cognitive, behavioral, & physical changes.

Reminiscence techniques are easily accepted, inexpensive, & may be applied in individual or group settings, in structured or unstructured formats, as an evaluative or nonevaluative process, and focusing on internal personal thoughts and feelings or on external events.

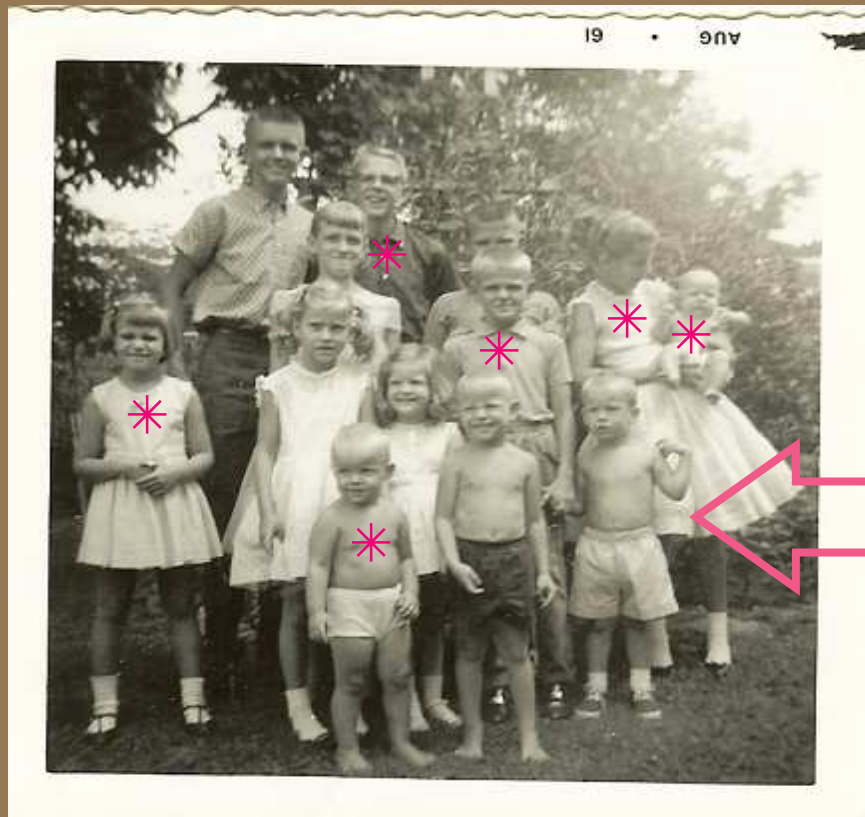
(Butler, 63, 80, Guasta, 93, Jones & Beck-Little 02, Kunz, 03)

Please note – they are still holding hands

Alzheimer's Statistics

- 4.5 million Americans = currently diagnosed
10% of those >65 & ~50% >85
- 11-16 million = estimated diagnosed by 2050
- 8-20 years on average = longevity post-diagnosis
depending on comorbidities ~½ as long as without dementia

Alzheimer's Association <http://www.alz.org/resources/factsheets/fsalzheimersstats.pdf>



Who will it be?
Odds are some 6 of us...

Dementias disrupt short-term memory

Reminiscence circumnavigates short-term storage to access remote memory – rendering the inaccessible short-term less important & the related losses less bitter.



To counteract the transitions, losses, & frustrations attributable to dementia, therapeutic remembering provides a satisfying & enjoyable route to promote self-esteem, positive self-image, & well being.



Reminiscence is cost effective & a reliable non-pharmaceutical method of reducing depression and increasing mood and behavior in elderly adults.

(Bohlmeijer 2003, Bryant 2005, Butler 1963, Wang 2004 & 2005)



Earlier in life we look forward,
planning for the future.



In later life it becomes more
important to look back & enjoy
the finished product - we need
to talk over our accumulated
experience, review & reminisce
to make sense of it all & come
to terms with our choices.



Some guidelines for facilitating reminiscence:



Listen without correction or criticism. Older adults are presenting their valid version of reality. Perception is 100% of everything.

Encourage anecdotes & old stories. If someone is withdrawn, use prompts: Tell me again about where you lived when you were little – about your first car – about when the house burned down...I'd like to hear about it.

Be patient with repetition. Retelling one story often aids coming to terms with the experience – may be the only story they can remember.

Encourage older adults to cover the decades: What was it like when you were little? Growing up on that farm? During World War II?

If dwells on sad situations, listen then gently turn the exchange: That was difficult for you, but let's talk about something more cheerful for a while. Tell me about when you and Dad got married.

Some people reminisce at length, some more briefly. Either is okay.

Reminiscence Techniques

- ❖ Simple, can be implemented and enjoyed by everybody
- ❖ Appropriate for all ages, levels of education, & abilities
- ❖ Can be used institutionally or at home – in dyads or groups
- ❖ Follow the natural cognitive processes in older folks
- ❖ Help preserve dignity and improve mood, self-esteem, behavior
- ❖ Facilitate resolution of life events & feelings, reduce fear & anxiety
- ❖ Can serve as a wonderful oral history for the family
- ❖ Reinforce coping mechanisms
- ❖ Help avoid polypharmacy
- ❖ Create social interaction
- ❖ Reduce caregiver burden
- ❖ Structured or impromptu
- ❖ Are endlessly adaptable
- ❖ Alleviate depression
- ❖ Reinforce bonds
- ❖ No cost



(Bohlmeijer 2003, Bryant 2005,
Butler 1962, Wang 2005)



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