RELATIONAL CARING

Key Principles:
• Compassionate relationships are at the core of human wellness
• Human beings learn, grow and thrive best in mutual and reciprocal relationships
• Relational caring focuses on deep connection, interdependence, and collaboration
• Relationships are important for nurturing a sense of:
  ➢ safety and security
  ➢ belonging
  ➢ purpose and meaning
  ➢ continuity
  ➢ achievement
  ➢ significance
• Relationships exist within complex, dynamic, nested webs of connections and influence and are influenced by (enabled/limited) wider social, cultural and environmental relationships

Relational Caring
• is an on-going process of building a person’s capacity to:
  o support another person in their growth and well-being
  o nurture ‘well’ relationships and effect change in relationships when needed
• it involves:
  o being aware of and attentive to oneself, others, and relationships
  o showing empathy and curiosity by being responsive and emotionally present, moved by, and interested in others
  o being open to the role we play in relationships and alert to the potential consequences of our feelings and actions with others
  o being open to mutual influence and that learning and change flows both ways
  o being real, honest, and open with others in a respectful and compassionate way
  o experiencing vulnerability as a place of potential growth rather than danger
  o sharing power and working in partnership with others
  o respecting the abilities of all persons to live and have meaningful relationships
  o removing barriers in order to facilitate freedom, self-expression, and strong compassionate relationships

Examples of Ways to Nurture Relational Caring

Relational Caring through Voice and Spoken Language
➤ before we begin, explaining what we are doing and why
➤ simplifying language used and tasks/activities
➤ being gentle/using a calm voice and manner
➤ listening actively and carefully and repeating words or phrases the person has used
➤ being attuned to the words we use, thinking about how words might be received and removing all stigmatizing words

Relational Caring through Body Language
➤ being attuned to what our body language might be communicating
➤ recognizing how others express themselves and share information through their bodies

- approaching the person from the front
- relating at the person’s eye level
- showing affection and using a compassionate and calming touch
- modelling/showing what we would like the person to do

**Relational Caring through Reciprocity**
- understanding how we influence and are dependent on each other
- speaking and moving with an awareness of the possible consequences of our feelings and actions for other people
- building relationships grounded in mutuality, trust, patience, compassion, and respect
- assisting the person in making their own decisions
- asking the person about his/her life and sharing aspects of our lives with others
- providing meaningful experiences/interactions so the person can continue to feel useful and valued and telling the person what we have learned from them
- asking for and accepting help and support from others
- using collaborative decision-making and problem-solving
- being aware of and supporting our own needs as well as the needs of others

**Relational Caring through Being Present with others**
- believing that the person is “still there” and continues to have abilities and the capacity to be in relationship and communicate in meaningful ways
- respecting and being able to “go with” the person’s realities
- moving with the person’s rhythms, slowing down
- being flexible in routines and ways of living
- knowing and respecting individual preferences, biographies, and histories
- being emotionally present, which involves being with, being responsive, and the sharing of emotions and feelings (e.g., joy, happiness, loneliness, fear, sadness, powerlessness, anger, boredom, etc.)
- being attuned to all the factors that can shape experiences and expressions of those experiences including how the person might be experiencing their bodies and the broader social and physical environments

**Questions to Reflect On**

Think of a time when you were experiencing an engaging meaningful relationship. What helps you to be in relation with others?

Think of a time when you were not connected in relationship. What got in the way?

**Sources**


