



THE BENEFITS OF DOLL THERAPY

Doll Therapy offers a number of benefits, such as increased smiling and a decrease in challenging behaviors. Some dementia patients are dramatically calmed by holding a doll regularly or interacting with the doll with great joy. Others also feel that it's beneficial for someone with dementia to be able to serve as a caregiver.

Doll therapy is a non-pharmacologic way to address challenging emotions and behaviors that may develop in dementia. There are no medication side effects or drug interactions with doll therapy. Caregivers sometimes report that when a loved one is holding a doll, they are able to more easily provide care to their family member or resident because of the distraction and comfort the doll provides.



The SenSupport Program was made possible by Nova Scotia Continuing Care Innovation Pilot funds.

Ask about all of the SenSupport brochures.

- Puzzles & Games
- Doll Therapy
- Fidget Toys
- Reminiscence Therapy
- Robotic Pets



SENSUPPORT Loan Program

DOLL THERAPY



Why Doll Therapy?

Some people with dementia mistake dolls for real infants. If caregivers support this belief instead of correcting it, it can create a therapeutic opportunity.

Dementia affects most recent memories first. This means people sometimes remember their 20s and 30s better than recent events.

Caring for a doll can bring back memories of the person's time as a parent, and give them a sense of purpose in their day-to-day lives.

The role of a parent is one of society's most valued roles. A person that uses a therapy doll will often feel very proud of themselves and their "child", a major reason for their use!

Making sure babies eat and sleep enough is a major part of a parent's job. A therapy doll can serve as a reminder of these important tasks, and the user might eat and sleep better as a result.

Who is Doll Therapy for?

In earlier stages of dementia, a person will recognize that the doll is not real. Do not try and convince them. Instead, try another item from the Victoria County Home Support Services lending library.

Starting Out

It may take a little while for a person to warm up to a therapy doll. Try it out for a week or so, and see how the person responds. There is no need to name it or explain where it came from.

Always let the person choose for themselves when to interact with the doll. Providing a "crib" (ie, a shoebox lined with blankets) can help. If there is no safe spot to put the doll, they might feel they can never put it down!



Signs of Success

Watch the person's body language closely when they are using the doll. Do you notice a difference? They should be calm, content, and interested in the doll. You might also see reductions in behaviours like yelling or crying.

There is no correct length of time for a person to use a therapy doll. Some people are occupied all day, and others will pick it up for a few minutes at a time. Both are successes!

HELPFUL HINTS

1

PLAY ALONG

Act as though the doll is real. Sing to it, bounce it, and handle it gently, especially when the person is watching. Offer to help change the doll's outfits or swaddle the doll in blankets.

2

OFFER TO "BABYSIT"

If the person seems worried or stressed about their caregiving duties, offer to babysit or place it in a safe spot to 'nap'. Every new parent needs a break!

3

ENCOURAGE THEM

There is no need to correct caregiving mistakes, like holding the doll upside down. As long as they are enjoying themselves, let them be!