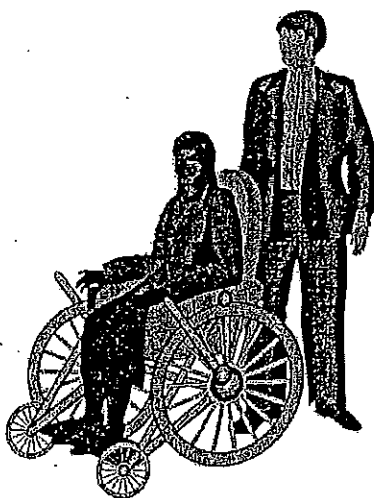


Non-Elderly Residents

A glance down the hallway of the typical long-term care facility could help you understand why these facilities were once called "old age homes." Most of the residents are old—and very old at that. However, nearly 10% of all nursing home residents are under age 65.

Although they do make up the minority, residents in their 50s, 40s, 30s, and even younger can be found in long-term care facilities. Let's look at some of the younger residents who you may meet.

Marcie Young is a 43 year-old woman who has just been admitted to the facility. Her multiple sclerosis (MS) has progressed to the point that she is wheelchair bound and in need of considerable assistance with her activities of daily living. She had been cared for by her husband and daughter, but her daughter is attending an out-of-state college and her husband has separated from her and begun a relationship with another woman. The little money her husband provided barely paid for her rent, and she had no funds to pay for inhome care. Without the funds or family to provide the assistance she needed, she had no alternative than to enter a nursing home.



Katie O'Brien is 26 years old and has cerebral palsy (CP). Her parents cared for her quite well and gave her a full and happy life. Two years ago her mother died of cancer. Her father tried to replace the care her mother provided by hiring part-time caregivers and providing care himself, but the plan wasn't working. Katie began to develop complications such as pressure ulcers and infections. After exploring all possible resources, Katie's father had no option but to admit her to a long-term care facility so that she could get the physical care she needed.

Johnie "Gold Man", as he was known on the street, received a gunshot wound 5 years ago when he was 30 years old that left him paralyzed from the neck down. He has some movement of his fingers that allows him to ride his motorized wheelchair throughout the facility. He is friendly and likes impressing the staff with stories of his past criminal activities and his life before the shooting.

Strokes...head injuries...developmental disabilities... there are many conditions that can cause younger adults to become one of your residents.

Reactions to Entering a Long-Term Care Facility

What would *you* feel like if you became a nursing home resident today? Write down some of the reactions you could have.

Chances are it is difficult to imagine yourself being admitted to a long-term care facility. This isn't something many people think about. Yet, it is not an impossibility.

Even if you understood that you needed the kind of care the facility could provide, you most likely wouldn't be delighted to become a nursing home resident. You may react in ways that could be labeled "negative" by your caregivers. Some of the possible reactions that a younger resident could have are described in the box below.

Younger people can have many reactions as they adjust to the facility

Possible Reactions of Non-Elderly Residents to Being Admitted to a Long-Term Care Facility



Depression As is the case with any person admitted to a nursing home, the non-elderly resident can be depressed over the loss of independence, removal from community life, and living among people who are much older.



Failure to Thrive When people feel depressed and hopeless, they may not eat or sleep well. This is compounded if they feel a lack of emotional comfort. Just as babies fail to grow and develop when lacking personal touch and love, adults can waste away and develop complications.



Anger There are plenty of reasons for younger residents to become angry at their situation. While others their age are working, raising families, and enjoying life, they are dealing with an illness and living in a nursing home. Their anger can be shown in the form of outbursts, refusal to comply with care, and calling others unkind names.



Complaining Sometimes when people are frustrated or unhappy, they deal with their feelings by finding fault in others. These residents may see that you're very busy and doing your best, yet they criticize and complain.



Attention-Getting Some residents may have a need to stand out from others or desire more attention than they receive through their caregiving activities. They may resort to attention-getting behaviors, ranging from doing something that they aren't supposed to do to (such as leaving the facility alone) to loudly telling stories in the hallway.



Abusive Behavior Some people do not know healthy ways to deal with their anger and frustration. Instead, they take it out on others in the form of abusive language or violent acts.

Needs of Non-Elderly Residents

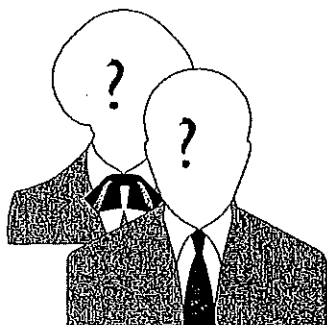
Regardless of age, all residents share some of the same basic needs, which include:

- good physical care
- socialization, activity
- assistance as needed
- respect of rights
- prevention of complications
- medications and/or other treatments
- clean, safe environment

However, there are some additional issues that must be considered for younger residents:

Identity

Every human being has a unique identity. They fill certain roles, such as son, parent, sister, spouse, friend, and employee.



Most of these roles do not vanish when people enter a health care facility, although they do change.

For most older residents, changes in roles have been gradual and usually occurred while they lived in the community. They were able to change their relationship with family members over the years. They often have been able to prepare for their retirement. Now in their later years, they may not be involved in the same activities that they were when they were younger, but their lives may not be that much different from other elders. Upon entering a nursing home, they find many peers with whom they can identify.

The picture is somewhat differ-

Questions and leading comments you can use to learn about residents:

- Where are you from?
- Tell me a little about your family?
- What type of things did you enjoy doing before your illness/injury?
- I hear you come from a big family. What are your brothers and sisters like?
- What type of work did you do?
- What are the kinds of things you used to like to do?
- What would you say you have been best known for?

ent for younger residents. Most often, there are few residents of their own age in the facility. They have had little to no experience with peers needing total care or institutionalization. And if their condition was sudden, such as caused by a stroke or accident, they have not had a chance to prepare for their role changes.

The fact that non-elderly residents' identities have changed doesn't mean that they do not have unique identities. A challenge for you as a caregiver is to learn about the individual who resides in the resident.

During your routine caregiving activities, ask questions that can help you learn about the resident. Questions and leading comments you can use are listed in the box above.

Rather than try to have residents all conform to a certain style, respect and promote their individuality. Fix their hair in a style that they like; dress them in clothes that they'd prefer to wear; call them by the name they like to use; afford them as much freedom as possible. Do not expect non-

Learn about the unique person who exists within the resident.

elderly residents to act, think, or look like older residents. Help them to maintain and promote their unique identities.

Sexuality

An important aspect of the identity of non-elderly residents is their sexuality. Although older residents also have needs for sexual identity and sexual gratification, these needs will be stronger in younger adults. It may be very important to younger residents to be attractively dressed and groomed.

Women may desire make-up on their face before leaving their rooms and men may want to be cleanly shaven (or in some cases, allowed to have a beard). It is important to preserve their image of what it means to them to be a man or woman as much as possible.

Non-elderly residents may have a stronger desire for sex than elderly residents. This may cause them to make advances to staff or other residents, or masturbate. While being respectful, staff need to set limits if advances are made to them. If two consenting, mentally competent residents choose to have physical contact, they needn't be prevented from doing so as long as it does not violate the rights of others or expose others to activities that should be conducted behind closed doors. When situations like this arise, it is best for the team to discuss the matter and develop a plan that affords the spe-

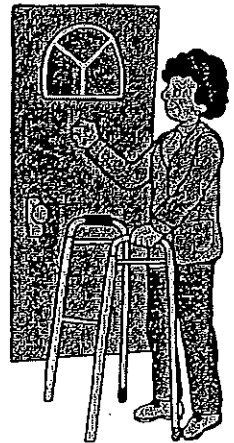


cific residents the freedom to sexual expression without violating the rights of others or the laws governing the facility.

Connection

It is important to assist younger residents in keeping their connections with the outside community to the greatest extent possible. One way of doing this is *to help visitors to feel comfortable visiting*. Many people find visitation in a health care facility difficult and this can be especially true for younger adults who have had little experience with nursing homes or sick people. The sights, sounds, and odors that are second nature to you may be difficult for visitors. Keep this in mind and help the environment to be presentable and comfortable. Assure that the resident is well-groomed and properly dressed to receive visitors. Suggest activities that visitors can share with residents and offer privacy.

Family relations can be interrupted when someone enters a nursing home. Couples that once shared intimate moments may feel uneasy showing affection to each other in view of staff and other residents. The resident may feel uncertain as to the role she is to have with her children and her children may feel uneasy relating to their parent in a nursing home setting. It is unrealistic to think that normal family relationships can be maintained when a member resides in a facility, however, efforts can be made to promote family involvement with the resident.



Visitors
can benefit
from
suggestions
for activities
they can
share with
the resident

Ways that this could happen include:

- helping the family to take the resident outside or on visits home
- suggesting to the family that they hold parties or "family dinners" in an activity room
- arranging for the family to use space and equipment within the facility to watch a movie with the resident (and perhaps share some popcorn!)
- encouraging the family to share family events by bringing family photos or videos to the resident

Non-elderly residents may lack opportunities to socialize with people their own age. If another resident within a close age range resides in the facility, attempt to pair them as roommates or arrange for them to visit each other. Local youth groups and churches can be asked to seek volunteers who can visit, also.

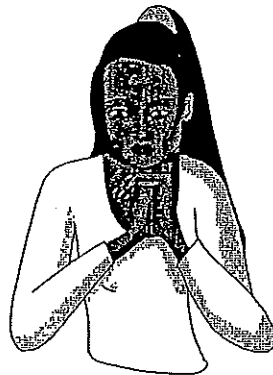
Purpose

Most people want to feel that their lives have meaning and that there is something to look forward to each day. This can be especially true of younger residents who have energy and a need for mental stimulation. Try to find meaningful tasks for these residents to perform, such as distributing mail, visiting other residents, organizing special projects, and taking care of plants and pets. Learn about the talents and skills residents have and put them to use.



Spiritual Comfort

Like all residents, younger adults have spiritual needs that must be considered. They may struggle with why their lives have taken this turn. They may think God is punishing them or question if God even exists.



These thoughts can be very distressing. Allow residents to express their concerns without making judgments or telling them they "shouldn't think like that."

Sometimes, remaining silent and just listening can be the most important action you can take. Be sure to let the nurse know about residents' feelings so that their needs can be assessed.

The practice of religion is one aspect of meeting spiritual needs. Residents may appreciate visits from clergy or having a volunteer read the Bible. Report these needs to the nurse.

Hope is important for residents. It can be very depressing for them to think that they may continue to decline or that their future will hold nothing more than what they have today. Find ways to encourage residents and to help them see the positive things in their lives. Be sure not to crush hopes and dreams. You needn't give false hope with unrealistic claims about cures and miracles, but do remember that no one knows what tomorrow's medical discoveries can bring.

Listening without making judgments is an important way to support residents

Preventing yourself from becoming a patient or resident



It probably goes without saying that the last thing you would want is to be too sick or disabled to care for yourself. Working in a health care facility has shown you the differences between your lifestyle and that of the residents for whom you care. Yet, good health and independent function don't just happen. They require attention to your health and action on your part. The short test below highlights some of the issues that are considered in promoting your health. Take this test and see how well you're doing.

Etc...

	Yes	No
I eat a low-fat, high-fiber diet		
My weight is within the ideal range		
I drink at least 8 glasses/cups of fluid daily		
I get at least 6 hours of uninterrupted sleep		
I have a daily bowel movement		
I seldom have colds and infections		
I do at least 20 minutes of exercise (aerobic, stretching, strengthening) at least 3 times/wk		
I get regular check-ups		
I inspect my entire skin surface monthly		
<i>Man:</i> I perform monthly testicular self-exams		
<i>Woman:</i>		
I perform monthly self-breast exams		
I have an annual mammogram & GYN exam		
I have an annual dental exam		
I have an annual eye exam		
I do not abuse alcohol or drugs		
I have a satisfying sex life		
I have energy and enthusiasm most days		
I get symptoms checked promptly		

If you said *yes* to all of the questions you've got some good health practices that you should continue. If you have 6 or more *NOs*, consider making some serious changes. Examine any of the items that you've checked *NO* and consider writing some goals and plans to change them. There are some things you will not be able to control, but for those that you can, make smart choices to stay healthy.

Non-Elderly Residents Test Questions

1. To help younger adults adjust to the facility, their friends should be discouraged from visiting for the first month.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. You see the Activities Therapist instruct a young male resident in how to use the DVD player to be able to show movies to residents during the evening shift. This could be a way to give the resident:
 - a. busy work
 - b. spiritual comfort
 - c. purpose
 - d. individuality
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. The practice of religious rituals is one aspect of meeting spiritual needs.
 - a. True
 - b. False
7. All family roles are lost when someone become a nursing home resident.
 - a. True
 - b. False
8. You enter the room of 35 year-old Mr. Henning and see him masturbating. Your best action is to:
 - a. leave him alone and close the door
 - b. tell him to stop immediately
 - c. ignore his action and ask if he needs to go to the bathroom
 - d. call for help
9. Bobbie Clark is a 20 year-old who became paralyzed from the neck down from a diving accident during his break from college. He is expressing a lot of anger and telling you that this is not the way he wants to spend the rest of his life. Your best action is to:
 - a. tell him he'll be going back to school in no time
 - b. tell him he should try to accept his condition
 - c. leave him alone
 - d. listen
10. Non-elderly residents have the same rights as all residents.
 - a. True
 - b. False

NAME:

DATE: