

## **Responding to distress and difficult questions. V.E.R.A, Wellbrahams.**

We're often confused about how to respond to someone living with dementia when they insist something is happening when you know it isn't so.

For example, 1, From your mother "I've got to go now your father is expecting me" this is when your father passed away ten years ago. Your mother becomes increasingly agitated when you say "No, you have to stay here you're comfortable here". 2. Your father is living with dementia and early every day he becomes very agitated saying "I'll be late for work again! I'll get fired. I don't know what to do. How do I get out? Help me please". You don't know how to answer.

A helpful approach and an aid to memory for carers is V.E.R.A (must be associated with Vera Lyn and the 1940's).

**V** = Validate, accepting that the behaviour shown has a value and meaning to the person and isn't just a symptom of dementia.

**E**=Emotion, paying attention to the emotional content of what the person's saying.

**R**=Reassure the person, this can be as simple as saying "It'll be OK" and smiling and possibly holding their hand or touching them if appropriate.

**A**=Activity, people living with dementia need to feel occupied, active, see if you can engage them in a related activity making tea, tidying, walking, washing up etc

In Practice:

Taking example 1. How to use VERA

**V**, "You had such a great relationship with dad, it was lovely to see"

**E**," I know you'd be upset if you missed your meeting".

**R**, "It's so lovely seeing you today, everything's fine" smile throughout.

**A**, "Wow I'm thirsty do you fancy making a cup of tea with me?"

Taking example 2.

**V**, "You're really worried, you always enjoyed work, what was your favourite bit?"

Here, you accept his perception of the problem, you don't question and you encourage him to say more.

**E**, "I'd feel worried if I thought I was letting work down".

This shows you understand why he's worried.

**R**, "It's all OK it's lovely seeing you up and about" smile throughout.

This states that no harm will come to him either real or imagined.

**A**, "We've got things to do, can you help me to tidy these chairs?"

An activity fitting in with his thoughts about work and incorporates this behaviour rather than invalidating it.

