LMA as Training and Evaluation Tool in Nonverbal Communication

Donna Newman-Bluestein

Donna, MEd, BC-DMT, LMHC, has worked with people from ages 3 to 106, whose wide range of abilities and special needs include dementia, mental illness, chronic pain, and coronary artery disease. Donna is a senior lecturer for Lesley University's Graduate School of Arts & Social Sciences, supervises dance/movement therapists toward board certification, has taught at Kinections ™ and is currently Public Relations Chairperson for the American Dance Therapy Association.

In 2010, dance/movement therapist Donna Newman-Bluestein piloted an embodied approach to training caregivers of people with dementia in relationship-centered nonverbal communication at Friends Village Assisted Living, Woodstown, NJ. Thirty-three mental health professionals, para-professional caregivers, and family members were invited to participate in the 20 hour training in four cohort groups over a nine month period. The training was designed "to improve the sense of relatedness between caregiver and persons with dementia, thus enhancing the quality of life for persons with dementia" on a residential memory unit (Newman-Bluestein & Chang 2011).

Newman-Bluestein used Laban Movement Analysis, Mettler-based creative dance, and dance/movement therapy as theoretical framework and as modes of transmitting experiential

learning. As part of their training, all trainees participated in at least one DMT group led by Newman-Bluestein with people with dementia. Certified Movement Analyst (CMA) Jackie Hand served as a consultant to analyze select video clips, first to identify successful elements of Newman- Bluestein's nonverbal interaction with people with dementia while leading DMT groups and subsequently to identify changes in the nonverbal communication skills of staff/trainees interacting with residents. Analysis found that as staff caregivers became more practiced at non-verbal communication, they became more adept movement observers, able to see things from the point of view of their clients, and more skilled and effective in providing person-centered care.

Newman-Bluestein and Chang presented the evaluation research in a poster presentation at the 2011 ADTA conference and are in the process of writing up the findings which they hope to publish in the American Journal of Dance Therapy.

The 20-hour model has since been replicated for Alternate Route DMT education. Newman-Bluestein and *Chang have completed a Train the Trainer manual, including a handout manual to accompany trainings, thanks in part to a grant from the Alzheimer's Foundation of America's 2010 Brodsky grant.

References

Newman-Bluestein, D. & Chang, M. (2011). Relationship-centered nonverbal communication training for caregivers of people with dementia: An embodied approach. Poster presentation at the 46th Annual ADTA Conference.

*Meg Chang took part in the training, providing feedback, assisting with grant writing, developing evaluation research parameters and edited the training manual that resulted. Meg, EdD, BC-DMT, LCAT, NCC, is an educator specializing in intercultural aspects of DMT in East Asia and the U.S. She is a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) consultant; private practitioner and supervisor; author; currently Core Faculty and Chair of the Somatic Psychology Program at The California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco.