

Summer 2017



# HOSPICE HAPPENINGS

Compassionate care for the terminally ill, their caregivers and their families

Serving our community since 1978

**Volunteer Hospice of Clallam County (VHOCC) is a 501c3 non-profit charitable organization, whose service area stretches from Diamond Point to Joyce.**



**The mission of Volunteer Hospice of Clallam County is to provide physical, emotional and spiritual support to terminally ill patients and their families with free around the clock registered nursing availability and trained volunteers.**

**This support enables patients to live out their final days as fully and comfortably as possible. Ongoing grief support services are also offered to the families and to anyone in the community who has experienced the death of a loved one.**

**Since its inception in 1978, all services have been provided free of charge to patients and their families; VHOCC does not bill any government agency for its services.**

## USING VALIDATION WITH DEMENTIA PATIENTS

*Edited and reproduced with permission from Naomi Feil's article "What is Validation?"*

Validation is a method to communicate with and help very old people who are living with dementia, and their caregivers. They are often struggling to resolve unfinished issues from their past. They have lost the cognitive ability for clear, linear thinking. Often caregivers have difficulties communicating with elders when they express needs and emotions in a disguised form; become time confused; use movements to express needs and emotions when words fail; and, at the extreme, shut out the world and give up attempts to communicate.

In the face of these difficulties, Validation techniques help demented people express their issues verbally or non-verbally. Validation practitioners offer caring nonjudgmental empathy, completely open to the feeling that the demented persons express. When communication succeeds the intensity of negative feelings lessens and withdrawal becomes less likely.

Naomi Feil has outlined eleven principles as guides to developing a validating attitude. Although oriented toward the demented and expressly age specific, these principles appear to apply much more generally to our attempts to help the dying express their own truth. In what follows I quote directly the eleven principles as put forward by Naomi Feil, while adapting and shortening the discussion of each of them.

1. "All very old people are unique and worthwhile." We address them respectfully starting with use of their name. Mrs. Smith, not dearie, sweetie, or grandma.

2. "Maloriented and disoriented old people should be accepted as they are. We should not try to change

**continued on page 2**



## **Board of Directors**

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## **Hospice Hugs**

Bella Italia Restaurant

C'est Si Bon Restaurant

Drennan & Ford Funeral Home

New Day Eatery

Swain's General Store

Traylor Restaurant

Westside Pizza

## **Volunteers of the month**

February: **Lori Jacobs**

March: **Betty Conger**

April: **Volunteer**

**Appreciation Luncheon**

May: **Gail Porter**

June: **Liz Sullivan**

## **continued from page 1**

them." Example: after just eating, a patient demands her breakfast. We avoid the negative response, "You can't be hungry."

3. "Listening with empathy builds trust, reduces anxiety, and restores dignity." We respond to and empathize with the feelings expressed. It is not useful to comment on the accuracy of the facts.

4. "Painful feelings that are expressed, acknowledged and validated by a trusted listener will diminish. Painful feelings that are ignored or suppressed will gain in strength." The cat ignored becomes a tiger.

5. "There is a reason behind the behavior of very old and disoriented people." Although we do not always know why a person behaves in a certain way, we try to help her express emotions and resolve unfinished business.

6. "The reasons that underlie the behavior of very old people are...basic human needs." There is no reason to expect these needs to be clearly expressed in our terms. Disoriented people are drawn to the past or are pushed from the present in order to satisfy their needs. They: resolve, retreat, relieve, relive, express. We accept that old people are in the final stage of life and are often in their own personal reality. We see this as a wise and healing response to an unbearable present.

7. "Early learned behavior returns when verbal ability and recent memory fail." Early learned movement can replace speech. Words may be invented. Without understanding, we can mirror breathing, movements, gestures, body tension, and sounds. This may allow us to meet the person where he is at the moment even if we can't explain his behavior logically.

8. "Personal symbols used by the disoriented elderly are people or things (in present time) that represent people, things or concepts from the past, and these symbols are laden with emotion." A male caregiver becomes Father, a hallway becomes a street, a wheelchair becomes a car. We accept that symbols express needs and feelings. We listen and react with empathy, although we may not understand.

9. "Maloriented and disoriented persons live on several levels of awareness, often at the same time." We acknowledge that the older person knows the truth on a deep level of awareness and never lie.

10. "When the five senses fail, disoriented elderly people stimulate and use their 'inner senses'. They see with their 'mind's eye' and hear sounds from the past." When they see and hear things that we do not, we accept that these things are expressing a deep need and are part of their personal reality.

11. "Events, sounds, smells, tastes, and images create emotions which in turn trigger similar emotions experienced in the past. Old people react in present time the **continued on page 3**

continued from page 2

same way they did in the past." We accept and acknowledge that past experiences and their associated emotions can be triggered. We explore these emotions without judgement and with empathy.



### Summing Up

When we are trying to help a demented person we remember that he has basic needs quite similar to our own. We may have difficulty to understand him in objective logical terms. On the other hand we are faced with a struggling human being, who is approaching death and who needs our help in resolving unfinished issues. We strive for empathic presence and nonjudgmental acceptance of reality as he sees it. We accept his interpretation of his reality. In this way we validate both his personhood and his efforts to make sense of his world, thereby maintaining his dignity.

*(For a more complete discussion of validation theory see <https://vfvalidation.org/>)*

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### VHOCC is on Facebook!

Follow us there for even more frequent news updates and sharing of published articles related to a vast range of hospice and caregiving related topics. “

Like” our Facebook page to spread word of our mission to your community of friends. We can use all the friends we can get!

## 4 Reasons to Get Our Email Newsletter

We're inviting you to “go green” by subscribing to the email version of the VHOCC Newsletter.

**Greater content!** – Without the constraints of production and postage costs, the email edition is able to provide more articles of interest to our community. For instance, the Spring 2017 email only issue included three pieces that subscribers to the paper version of our newsletter never got. One was on the value of Music Therapy, specifically as it relates to palliative care and news of the recently formed Clallam County Threshold Choir, which is available to serve local clients. Another one was in regard to the growing social phenomenon known as “Orphaned Elders” and gave some tips on how to avoid feeling alone and without support in the later years of life. And a third article was a plea for volunteers interested in learning hands-on caregiving to provide assistance to our patients. Again, you can only find this expanded content in the email version of the newsletter. The good news is you can easily access it at [www.vhocc.org](http://www.vhocc.org).

**You can't lose it!** – The email newsletter is easy to return to for review and to forward it to friends and relations, far and wide.

**Save a tree!** – Okay, maybe only a twig in the grand scheme of things, but every little bit helps.

**Save VHOCC money to use, instead, for direct client services!** – each mailing of the newsletter costs approximately 50 cents in printing and postage expenses. Of course, we are happy to do this for those who don't have email or simply prefer a paper copy, but the electronic version can be disseminated to readers with one, virtually expense-free, click of a button.

*To subscribe to the email version of VHOCC Newsletter, simply email your name, email address, and phone number to [editor@vhocc.org](mailto:editor@vhocc.org) , with “Subscribe” in the subject line.*

*“While I thought that I was learning how to live, I have been learning how to die.”*

**Leonardo da Vinci**



Volunteer Hospice of Clallam County  
 540 E. 8th St.  
 Port Angeles, WA 98362

Nonprofit Org  
 U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
 Olympic Mailing  
 Services

**When you switch to email, you make a silent donation! THANK YOU.**

***Events***

Olympic Cellars Winery Summer Concert: August 12  
 Clallam County Fair booth: August 17-20  
 RC Club at Air Affaire: August 26

***Programs (registration required)***

**Community Education & Volunteer Training**

**Port Angeles**

Wednesdays, Sept. 27 – Nov. 1, 6:30 – 8 pm

**Port Angeles Grief Support Groups**

Tuesdays, July 11 – August 15, 2 – 3:30 pm  
 Tuesdays, October 17 - December 5, 2 - 3:30 pm

**Sequim Grief Support Groups**

Mondays, September 11 – October 9, 1 – 3 pm

**Sequim Survivors Workshops**

Thursdays, October 5 - 26, 1:30 - 3 pm  
 For more information go to [www.vhocc.org/calendar](http://www.vhocc.org/calendar)  
 Call 360-452-1511 to register to any program above

\*Drop-In Support Groups in Sequim & Port Angeles (after completing a Grief Support Group)

\*Bereavement One-on-One Support

\* PA Survivors Workshops

\*For dates & locations & to register, call 360-452-1511

**MEET ME AT THE FAIR!**

*We will dance the Hoochee Koochee  
 I will be your tootsie wootsie—Judy Garland*

This year, VHOCC booth at the Clallam County Fair (Aug 17 -20) will be honoring our many volunteers. Stop on by to look at the awesome pictures of our colorful volunteers and events and find out what our volunteers do and why they do it.

Our booth (#15) is in the Merchants Building like last year. So come dance the hoochee koochee and bring your tootsie wootsie!



A butterfly lights besides us like a sunbeam. And for a brief moment, its glory and beauty belong to our world. But then it flies on again and though we wish it could have stayed, we feel so lucky to have seen it.

*Courtesy of Betty Conger, respite volunteer*