

Best Practices The Netherlands



Abstract

The idea of the story table was born in a residential care center in Amsterdam. It is a table in which 6 screens are incorporated. Old screens, pictures from the past and songs from the old days can be seen on these screens. The approach is that all 6 displays show the same image. The effect of jointly looking at the images is that people behind the screens can easily start a conversation with each other (Latesteg, Osté, Horn, & Knipscheer, 2005).

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Analysis

"For the impact study, residents were divided into two groups on a voluntary basis; a group that started to participate in the meetings of the Storytable (experimental group) and a group that would not do this (control group). Participants from the experimental group participated weekly in a Storytable session. Before and after these sixteen weeks of using the Storytable, measurements were taken for both groups. Outcomes on these measurements (effect measures) were compared with each other. A total of 181 people were willing to participate in the effect study, of which 123 eventually completed the follow-up measurement. The investigation took a total of thirteen months and took place in the period from January 2004 to February 2005.

The most important results of the effect study are:

- There are indications that the participation of lonely elderly people in the Storytable sessions reduces their feelings of loneliness. Frequency of participation increases this effect.
- Frequent participation in the Storytable seems to have a positive influence on the feelings of depression among participants who were depressed at the start of the study. Frequent participation assumes a presence of at least 70% of the meetings.
- Frequent participation in the meetings with the Storytable leads to an improved sense of control over life. This only applies to people who initially feel that they have little control over life.
- The self-confidence of participants at the Storytable increases, when this is low at the start and when people have frequently participated in the meetings.
- Participation in the Storytable has no demonstrable influence on cognitive functioning and on the number and frequency of social contacts.

The results of the perception questionnaire. The questionnaire was filled in by the participants themselves and dealt with topics such as: method of use, experiences among participants and user satisfaction.

- Participants find the Storytable a good way to get in touch with people and get to know each other better.
- The Storytable is mainly used in groups and clearly less on an individual basis.
- The user satisfaction of the Storytable is highly valued, despite the technical malfunctions.
- The meetings with the Storytable are experienced as pleasant and atmospheric, but for some of the people there appears to be a point of saturation during the intervention period.

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The findings of the qualitative part of the study; the interviews with participants (8) and staff (12).

- The Storytable led to better contacts between residents and also to better contacts between residents and staff. The contacts were, however, mainly limited to (chance) meetings in public spaces of the institutions.
- The Storytable is a good way to recall memories and in general participants also like to recall memories.
- The Storytable is appreciated by staff and seen as an enrichment of the range of activities; the table is pleasant, user-friendly and it is easy to organize an activity.
- Supervisors distinguish three types of functions from the Storytable: entertainment, social contact and recalling memories.
- Counselors also see good opportunities to use the Storytable with other target groups, including (grand) children in combination with their (grand) parents and residents of psychogeriatric departments.
- Supervisors and staff placed great value on offering the Storytable as a supervised activity, among other things because of the explanation of the method of use, offering structure during the activity, and stimulating contributions (telling stories) by the participants.
- Limiting factors in the use of the Storytable were: technical malfunctions, wrong location of the Storytable, insufficient variation in the supply of fragments.

Based on the results of the research, recommendations have been made for optimal use of the Storytable and future research.

- Recommendations for use mainly relate to the functioning of the Storytable and the content of the activity.
- The technical functioning of the Storytable must be guaranteed. Although some elderly people are able to operate the Storytable independently, it is recommended that they continue to offer the Storytable also under supervision. Embedding the Storytable in the range of activities could guarantee this. Supervisors gave and received advice for the preparation and execution of the Storytable sessions. An extensive reference work that includes this type of information could make a valuable contribution to the optimal use of the Storytable

Links

Nieuwsteeg, J. J., Osté, J. P., Horn, L., & Knipscheer, C. P. (2005). *De Verhalentafel een studie naar de effecten van de Verhalentafel op de bewoners van zeven verzorgingshuis/woonzorgcentra*. Amsterdam: Faculteit Sociale Wetenschappen, Vrije universiteit.