



+Puppets in Care Settings

This is an excerpt from a participant handout – ‘Puppet Power – Connecting Generations’ – connecting through creativity and joy: exploring the power of puppetry in dementia care.

How does puppetry work?

Puppetry operates on an emotional level. Regardless of age, we all seem to respond to puppets. They were originally used with adults for making social and political comments, or passing on the latest news and stories in a way we could understand before books. We easily engage with puppets, maybe because of their innocence, humour and vulnerability, but also because of their moving portrayal of life.

"What is certain is that the puppet and the puppet play in different forms have existed since the earliest times, and are fundamental to the development of human kind." John Blundall (2012).

The world of puppetry can be an enjoyable meeting between people who have communication barriers. Conversations can be charged with all sorts of tensions, frustrations and misunderstandings. When people feel under pressure, the stress increases. People relate to one another on a complex level. This is especially true in relationships with family members, or those with whom we become involved through love, care or work. A change in how a person communicates can have knock-on effects, throwing others off track. An outcome of this often results in a reduction in interaction, as people are not sure how to engage outside the usual conversations.

Creativity and particularly puppetry creates a different space that supports interaction. By focusing on the shared creative activity instead of on the problem, people establish connections in the here and now. This approach is powerful, inclusive and joyful!

Karrie Marshall 2016

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There are lots of companies online where you can order realistic animal puppets (not teddies). I list a few that I have found so that you can have a look.

The Puppet Factory – they have a beautiful full bodied Yorkshire terrier puppet.

Puppets by Post – I spotted a lovely Jack Russell hand puppet.

Puppets, Plays and Story Days – this is where I found a border collie puppy like Bernard (the one Doris adopted!).

The Puppet Company – they have a great range of different animal puppets.

Happy shopping!

Check out the book review in Living Life – **‘Puppetry in Dementia Care’.**

+ Think
Puppets are not for everyone, knowing the residents you are caring for will help you.