

## Appendix A.

### Colin the Companion Cub Project (soft toy with removable solar-driven mp3 player used as therapeutic tool)

*Alzheimer counselling chats – therapeutic tool*

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*Preliminary framework*

Counselling on two dimensions:

- Empowering the **patient** (client) with Alzheimer Syndrome (ASP).
- Guidance to the **family** in coping with the situation of AS.

*The focus for the chats is within a **counselling context**. Thus, it is recommended that a family member or caregiver should assist the ASPs with the use of the Companion Cub. The ASPs may be guided/trained gradually to use the cub on their own later on.*

Specific focal points within the counselling experience:

- Providing handles to assistants (family members, caregivers).
- Focusing on understanding and mitigating the symptoms.
- Sensitised to acknowledge and address transition between phases.
- Training assistants in coping skills and making a difference.
- Providing companionship and comfort to the ASP.
- Multi-method approach: Companion Cub/snippet of music/subconscious message/'teaspoon full of sugar' – small substantial point to get across.

Counselling process informed by the *ground rationale*: as a condition, AS cannot be healed, arrested or turned around. Thus, the focus is not on psychological restoration; rather on recreation: not completion but companionship, assistance (being there) and comfort.

The process as recreational companionship may follow a gradual *progressive pattern* throughout the chats:

- **Recreative** companionship – being with and helping the ASP experience a positive psychological climate.
- **Reconstructive** care – helping ASP holding on to a small substance ('teaspoon full of sugar').
- **Regenerative** comfort – guiding ASP towards behaviour that makes a difference to them (even per counselling chat).

The focus for counselling chats:

- The sight framework of the ASPs: what attracts their attention?
- The basic needs of the ASPs: what is their immediate wants?

Provide silent guidance, ensuring human dignity and engaging the ASP through elementary/rudimentary interaction with the Companion Cub.

- Human dignity, within the scope of people with AS.
- Avoiding the universal view on human dignity and human rights – overstretched expectations and increased stress.
- Avoid perception of 'geriatric infancy'; rather focus on empowerment.
- Avoid highlighting issues that must be 'addressed' or instigating negative feelings.
- Focus on moment-to-care basis catering for basic needs and providing immediate comfort.

- o Counselling chats focus on relaxing the psychological climate through here and now companionship. Thus, indirectly handling feelings (fear, anxiety, anger, aggression, distraction, confusion, etc.)
- o Avoid rationalisation or problem-solving; focus on the *immediate* experience through the five senses (which is affected less by cognitive damage).

*Preliminary structure of counselling chats (four phases):*

1. **Run the routine:** help establish a familiar environment:
  - Start every chat de novo – introducing Colin the cub.
  - Involve the assistant: caregiver/family member to make ASP comfortable, switching on the chat at first.
  - Depending on the phase of AS, the patient can be shown how to use the mechanism.
2. **Set the scene:** Explain in simple terms the theme of the chat.
  - Use a “need builder” – focus on ASP’s basic wants and perspective.
  - The Companion Cub invites the ASP into the situation.
3. **Share the view:** Use the theme to broaden the ASP’s scope.
  - Provide piecemeal information on the theme.
  - Use music to help instil a positive psychological atmosphere.
4. **Sow the seed:** Empower the ASP with ‘teaspoon full of sugar’
  - Provide positive experience to take away,
  - Focus on creating a coping climate through companionship.
  - Provide (if possible) a ‘mantra’ that is inculcated into the subconscious.
  - Companion Cub ends the chat by graceful exit (to establish boundary).

*During chats:*

- **Avoid cross-references in chats:** ‘Remember when ...?’
- **Avoid negative inclinations** – attempting to rectify issues or solving problems.
- Focus on **selfless companionship and comfort:** being there and sharing wonder moments.
- **Focus on voice tone of Companion Cub – tone down inflections or dramatisation.**
- **Presented in a caring and comforting tone.**
- **The identity of the Companion Cub is downplayed** – merely **Colin the Cub**, not Grizzly or bear, which may evoke negative emotional experiences.

*Matrix of chats – focusing on the five senses (which is not/less affected by the AS condition):*

**20 chats (5X4)**

<b>Sight</b>	<i>sunset</i>	<i>mountains</i>	<i>wild flowers</i>	<i>pets</i>
<b>Hearing</b>	<i>birds</i>	<i>ocean</i>	<i>night time</i>	<i>children</i>
<b>Smell</b>	<i>flowers</i>	<i>baked bread</i>	<i>mother</i>	<i>earth after rain</i>
<b>Taste</b>	<i>breakfast</i>	<i>fruits</i>	<i>Pudding</i>	<i>drink</i>
<b>Feel/Touch</b>	<i>rain on the face</i>	<i>soft breeze</i>	<i>loving pet</i>	<i>someone's hand</i>

- **Focusing on the five senses.**
- **Linking it to feelings and behaviour.**
- **Connecting it with basic needs and wants.**
- The **sight can be linked to associated sound**; for the rest, thematic music would suffice.
- **Broadening the scope and providing moment-to-care guidance.**

(Author: *Claude Vosloo*

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