

# Experiential Learning

## Learning About Dementia

### Thrive Group

The Thrive Group and MCE teamed up with two Mohawk College instructional doctorates, Dr. Anne-Marie DePape and Dr. Krissy Doyle-Thomas, to deliver a session on 'Learning About Dementia through Experiential Learning'. Two sessions were delivered for healthcare professionals; one in Mississauga and another in Hamilton.

The session was divided into two-parts; a review of the aging process using an aging simulation, followed by a leader-led session on the origins, cause, and types of Dementia. Attention was given to the impact Dementia has on families and caregivers. See the video of the event [HERE](#).

#### Part 1

The sessions were immediately impactful by engaging the audience with an exercise in self-reflection to ascertain what the participants wanted out of the session. This allowed any bias to come forward before Anne-Marie educated the participants on the misconceptions about aging. A short video then tested the idea of memory declining with age.

Using a modified version of AGNES (Age Gain Now Empathy System), a system developed by the MIT Age Lab, the participants learned what happens when you age. For example, participants were given earplugs to simulate hearing loss, goggles to represent failing eyesight, gloves to reduce tactile sensation and other "props" intended to enhance empathy when working with the elderly.

Participants immediately felt uncomfortable and struggled with the sudden limitations. They expressed increased empathy about how aging 'feels'.



## Part II

Krissy began Part II of the session with a powerful case study to identify the symptoms and stages of Dementia. The stages were then categorized into Early, Mild, Mild-Moderate, Moderate, and Advanced.

Once the stages were understood, Krissy went on to explore how Alzheimer's affects the brain, comparing photos of a brain in various stages of degeneration with a healthy brain. A video was shared with the group that showed shrinkage in the hippocampus (area of the brain responsible for memory) indicating how difficult it is to reverse a brain in decline.



Modern medicine is able to slow the progression of Alzheimer's but incapable of reversing it. Testing executive functioning in people can reveal early signs of cognitive impairment and promote early intervention. Tests used include the Tower of London, Wisconsin Card Sorting, and the Stroop test.

According to the Canada Community Health Survey, it is anticipated that by 2020, one million people in Canada will suffer from Dementia and/or Alzheimer's. This is why understanding it is so important. It will impact us all in one way or another.



## Conclusion

Both Anne-Marie and Krissy know the impact Dementia has on caregivers, family and society, can be physical, psychological, social and economic. Together, with their expertise and experience in Experiential Learning, Anne-Marie and Krissy presented a case for care for both the patient and caregivers.

“The interactive elements were fun. I suggested to the facilitator to add rocks or corn in shoes to mimic neuropathy in feet or the tingling sensation of diabetes. You can also tape fingers together to restrict movement mimicking physical mobility due to a stroke. Also, hearing the experiences of other participants was eye-opening and informative. I think all caregivers should take a course like this. And I’d like to add that Alzheimer’s Canada is a great support system for caregivers.”

*Kim Cameron, AbleLiving*

“A fun, engaging session. Lots of In-depth information. It makes me want to adapt to the Japanese way of aging. In fact, I remember hearing about Japanese auto workers working out before their shifts to stay sharp and focused to ward off degenerative aging.”

*Christine Stange, AbleLiving*

## For More Information

To discuss opportunities for arranging this training session and/or for other areas of healthcare, please reach out to the MCE team at 905.575.2534 or [info@mcecor.com](mailto:info@mcecor.com).

