Life Story Work For Persons With Dementia - A New Look At A Key Component Of Excellent Care
Virginia Bell, MSW & David Troxel, MPH
Daphne Gormley, Santa Barbara

- Dx at 59
- Lived with her partner in Santa Barbara
- Ambitious, motivated.
- Featured in an HBO special produced by Maria Shriver
Daphne was a scientist/optician who worked on the Hubble Space Telescope.
• Daphne found therapeutic value and comfort in turning to painting.

• “One of the benefits of my art for me is that it provides me a way of communicating without words. The colors I use are colors I find to be joyous. This is a way for me express my joy in painting and in my life. AD has really taught me to concentrate on the things I can do not on the things I can no longer do.”
Daphne Gormley’s Art

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Daphne Gormley’s art
Create an “I” statement

• My name is Daphne. . .

  – I want. . . .
Being person centered

I dislike social workers, nurses, and friends who do not treat me as a real person.
Virginia Bell’s Top 10

1. Born on a farm in Kentucky.

2. Married to her husband Wayne, a retired minister and Seminary President

3. Family oriented. Loves to talk about her extended family.

4. Always valued school and learning – got her Master’s Degree at age 60

5. Known for her home-made “corn pudding” recipe.

6. Proud of her career as a writer and Alzheimer’s specialist.

7. Likes to be productive with meaningful activity.

8. Has been to 40 countries for work and for play!

9. Enjoys a good cup of coffee (decaf, black) and one glass of wine before dinner

10. Won many first place awards for running in the Bluegrass 10 K.
How to connect with that real person?

- Life Story Work

- Focus on early childhood but capture key life moments

- Capture personality and achievements not just basic biography

- Be updated regularly
How to connect with that real person?

• Be ambitious – can you learn 100 things?

• Teach family and professional carers the value of using life story for redirection, relationship building, & communication

Ask staff to share some key facts about their own lives.

Make sure information isn’t “lost in the charts”
Dorothy Troxel

- Earl Grey Tea with Milk
Bring the Life Story to Life!

- Renew your personal and organizational commitment

- Billy Small in Atlanta, “You should never read an obituary and be surprised.”