



## Gentle Persuasive Approaches: Stories from the Point of Care

Halton Region — Milton Adult Day Program & Allendale Long Term Care

*“I love my work, but during the pandemic there was just so much going on. It was eye-opening, emotional and tragic, like being in another world. In GPA coaching sessions, I reminded everyone that as care providers we had to leave our own worries at the door and put ourselves in our residents’ shoes. If COVID-19 was making us anxious and afraid, imagine what it was doing to our residents.”*

— Sandra O’Neill, CSW, GPA Certified Coach (CC)

**W**hen we asked GPA Certified Coaches to send us stories from the point of care for the **2020 | 2021 AGE Recognition Awards**, we asked if GPA had helped you and your teams be resilient? These stories recognize and celebrate that resilience. We don’t pretend to understand what you have been through over the past months, what you’ve seen, or what’s been asked or expected



Advanced Gerontological Education

Enhancing the care of older adults by learning together



Photo: The Milton team including GPA CCs Sandra O’Neill (middle row, second from left) and Mary Lloyd-Clifford (middle row, far left) and Nancy Fazzalari, Supervisor, Community Support Services (front row, far left)

of you. Many of you were redeployed to long-term care. Most of you are probably exhausted. These stories are a way of paying tribute to you and your wonderful work with GPA. Your belief in GPA held strong! Despite extraordinary circumstances, you continued to make time for GPA huddles, informal coaching, mentoring and modelling. Many of you trialed innovative ways to safely facilitate GPA Basics because you felt the education was too important to forgo. You shared what you learned with us and other organizations. You found ways to do GPA-Recharged. Some of you worked with AGE

to develop a virtual format for GPA CC Workshops so we could continue to train new Coaches. And you did all of this during an unpredictable, unrelenting global health crisis.

But most of all, you saw those in your care as family and you did what family must always do — protect its most vulnerable members, while supporting each other.

We are completely in awe!

## Sandra's story ...

The beautiful triling of the “R’s” in conversation with her gave it away. Sandra is a Scot and proud of it. She’s also proud of her career in dementia care. Sandra was certified as a GPA Certified Coach (CC) seven years ago while working for Acclaim Health. Her passion for GPA is such that she probably would have become a Coach sooner if GPA had been available in Glasgow, Scotland where her career in dementia care began.

Sandra is now a Client Support Worker at Milton Place Adult Day Program in Southern Ontario. She shares coaching duties with Mary Lloyd-Clifford, a Day Program Assistant. Mary previously worked as a Community Support Worker for the Alzheimer Society of Peel’s Behavioural Supports Ontario’s (BSO) programs. At the onset of the pandemic, Milton’s adult day program closed and some staff were redeployed to the behavioural unit in neighbouring Allendale Long Term Care Home. Prior to redeployment — **kudos to leadership** — the Coaches were asked to hold a GPA-Recharged session to refresh staff’s knowledge and skills.

During the pandemic, communication was one of the first things to suffer in every care setting. Body language, eye contact and facial expression play a major role in communicating and PPE got in the way. “Residents were faced with masked and gowned people they couldn’t recognize, whose facial expressions they couldn’t see. It was both confusing and frightening for them. Mary came

*up with the idea to print oversized photos of staff, smiling. We attached them to our gowns along with name tags, which helped ease residents’ anxiety,”* Sandra told us. Both the Coaches support regular GPA practice, mentoring, informal coaching moments and GPA team meetings. Despite the incredible day-to-day challenges of the pandemic, these things continued. “*We’re always looking for the least intrusive methods when working with residents and that’s GPA, every day,”* Sandra says.



### AGE Recognition Awards 2020 | 2021

During the pandemic, Allan (*name changed for privacy*) returned to the unit from a hospital stay for a seizure. Upon his return, severe behaviours began. One of the PSWs who regularly worked with him was having no success, so the team met to talk about solutions. “*When a staff member is not successful, sometimes it can be something as simple as what they are wearing, a facial expression or their unconscious body language, particularly with the added stress of COVID on*

*everyone,”* Sandra says. She’s big on discussion to bring about solutions, following the GPA tenet: Learn how to connect with the person ... and pass your success on to others.

The team often found themselves easing the minds of relatives during the pandemic. This is not uncommon in long-term care, but as many GPA Certified Coaches have told us, fear and anxiety were a constant for families who were going months without visiting their loved ones. For residents, careproviders became surrogate family.

There are times in the care setting when despite everyone’s best efforts, behaviours elevate and a care provider must use GPA’s self-protective techniques. Sandra was helping Jack bathe (*name changed for privacy*). Suddenly, he grabbed her arm and held on, becoming very vocal and agitated. Her reaction was textbook GPA — remain calm and try the one-handed release technique. “*It took me back to so many coaching sessions when I’ve taught this technique,”* Sandra says. “*Family members are often embarrassed when they see behaviours or hear their loved ones swearing or name calling. But we reassure them that swearing and name calling can’t hurt us.”* She tells family “*it’s part of our job as careproviders to uncover the reason for these behaviours.”*

“*I love GPA. I love coaching. I love promoting the program and at the end of the day, if GPA has helped the people I am working with, I’m really grateful. I would say that nine times out of ten we are successful with GPA,”* Sandra says.



A very special thank you to Sandra O’Neill, Nancy Fazzalari and leadership at Halton Region for their help and enthusiasm in sharing this story from the point of care.