

Role playing exercises for HCAs

Allowing Adequate Time for Meals

Role-Playing Exercise:

One participant plays the HCA, another plays the resident

Scenario 1

A resident enjoys taking their time with meals and prefers to chat while eating. Demonstrate how to support them while ensuring they don't feel rushed.

Practice:

- Engage the residents in friendly conversation while allowing them to eat at their own pace.
- Wait until the resident finishes one course before serving the next.
- Before clearing their plate, ask: *"Would you like more time, or are you finished?"*

Scenario 2

A resident struggles with their meal due to dexterity challenges but does not ask for assistance. Demonstrate how you provide support without making them feel rushed.

Practice:

- Observe carefully—offer help only when needed.
- Use gentle prompt: *"Would you like me to help with that, or would you prefer to take your time?"*
- Be patient, ensuring the resident has enough time to eat comfortably.

Discussion Questions

1. How can you balance efficiency with allowing residents to enjoy meals at their own pace?
2. What are subtle ways to offer help without making residents feel rushed?

Providing Assistance Respectfully

Role-Playing Exercise:

One participant plays the HCA, another plays the resident

Scenario 1

A resident requires help eating but wants to remain as independent as possible. Demonstrate how you provide support while maintaining their dignity.

Practice:

- Asking before assisting: *"Would you like some help with your meal?"*
- Sitting at eye level and maintaining gentle, encouraging communication
- Describing the meal, especially if the resident has vision impairment, or the meal is texture modified

Scenario 2

A resident with cognitive impairment is hesitant to eat a texture-modified meal. Demonstrate how you respectfully encourage them.

Practice:

- Use positive descriptions: *"This is a soft chicken with rich gravy—it smells delicious!"*
- Offer visual cues to help them recognise their food
- Allow them time to process and respond before prompting again.

Scenario 3

You are delivering a meal to a resident's room. They have difficulty cutting food and need assistance. Demonstrate how to provide good service.

Practice:

- Knock and wait before entering *"Good afternoon, John. May I bring in your lunch?"*
- *"Is there anything on your plate you would like me to help you cut up?"*
- Ensure that everything is presented nicely and accessible to the residents

Discussion Questions

1. How can staff support dignity when assisting residents with eating?
2. How can respectful service improve residents' experience and willingness to eat?
3. What strategies can make texture-modified meals more appealing to residents?

Engaging with Residents during Mealtimes

Role-Playing Exercise:

One participant plays the HCA, another plays the resident

Scenario 1

You are sitting with residents at mealtimes. One resident looks like they might need help, while another seems disengaged. Demonstrate how you engage with both.

Practice:

- Start a friendly conversation about food, memories, or hobbies.
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues that someone might need help.
- Offer assistance subtly: *"Would you like a hand with that?"*

Scenario 2

A resident appears anxious and is not eating much. Demonstrate how you encourage them to eat while making them feel comfortable.

Practice:

- Gently ask about their appetite: *"How's your meal tasting today?"*
- Encourage small bites without forcing: *"Take your time—I'm here if you need anything."*

Scenario 3

A resident who normally eats well is feeling less hungry today. Demonstrate how you offer choice without pressure while ensuring they get enough nutrition.

Practice:

- Check in: *"How are you feeling today? Would you like a lighter meal or your usual portion?"*
- Encourage without forcing: *"Would you like to start with a small amount and see how you feel?"*

Discussion Questions

1. How does social engagement affect a resident's willingness to eat?
2. What are some ways to encourage residents to enjoy their meals?
3. Why is it important to offer residents control over their meals?
4. How can offering choices improve appetite and satisfaction

Presenting Food in an Appealing Way

Role-Playing Exercise:

One participant plays the HCA, another plays the resident

Scenario 1

You are serving a texture-modified meal to a resident who is unsure about it. Demonstrate how you positively present the meal.

Practice:

- Describe the food using appetising language.
- Serve the meal neatly and avoid mixing different textures together.
- Reassure the residents if they seem hesitant: *"Let's try a little bit and see what you think."*

Scenario 2

A resident with reduced vision is unsure what's on their plate. Demonstrate how you guide them through the meal.

Practice:

- Explain the meal clearly: *"You have mashed potatoes on your left and chicken on your right."*
- Offer a visual or tactile guide, like placing their hand near the plate
- Check in: *"Would you like me to help, or are you comfortable with how it's set up?"*

Discussion Questions

1. How does food presentation impact appetite?
2. What are ways to make texture-modified meals visually appealing?