

STORYTELLING AND ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE: NARRATIVE ACTIVITY THAT PROMOTES IDENTITY AND FLOURISHES IN INTERACTION

STORYTELLING E MALATTIA DI ALZHEIMER: L'ATTIVITÀ NARRATIVA CHE PROMUOVE L'IDENTITÀ E FIORISCE NELL'INTERAZIONE

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Double Blind Peer Review

Citazione

Albanese M. (2023) Storytelling and alzheimer's disease: narrative activity that promotes identity and flourishes in interaction *Giornale Italiano di Educazione alla Salute, Sport e Didattica Inclusiva - Italian Journal of Health Education, Sports and Inclusive Didactics*. Anno 7, V 2. Supplemento Edizioni Universitarie Romane

Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.32043/gsd.v7i2.914>

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gsdjournal.it

ISSN: 2532-3296

ISBN: 978-88-6022-479-8

ABSTRACT

This study detects the use of storytelling for the promotion of the cognitive/identity and socio-cultural dimension of people over 55. A cultural storytelling workshop was conducted with a group of 14 people at the Alzheimer Café in Palermo. The results show that the methodology tested allows the valorisation of the person and that caregiver/group support is fundamental for the person with Alzheimer's disease when storytelling becomes 'fragile'.

Questo studio rileva l'uso dello storytelling per la promozione della dimensione cognitiva/identitaria e socioculturale delle persone over 55. Un workshop di storytelling culturale è stato condotto con un gruppo di 14 persone presso l'Alzheimer Café di Palermo. I risultati mostrano che la metodologia sperimentata permette la valorizzazione della persona e che il sostegno del caregiver/gruppo è fondamentale per la persona affetta da Malattia di Alzheimer quando la narrazione diventa 'fragile'.

KEYWORDS

Storytelling; Alzheimer disease; narrative methodology; identity dimension; community.

Storytelling; Malattia di Alzheimer; metodologia narrativa; dimensione identitaria; comunità.

Received 25/07/2023

Accepted 19/09/2023

Published 26/09/2023

Introduction

The various applications of the Storytelling methodology, even in the most diverse fields, confirm its functionality and ease of operation. It is well known that it is based on reflective techniques and tools such as autobiography, writing and oral storytelling (Di Paolo & Zollo, 2023). Analysing the term "storytelling", it is easy to identify the two minimal units that make up its essence: story + verb to tell. Telling one's life is a process of creating meaning (Ricoeur, 1991).

Today, the use of storytelling is strongly linked, for example, to didactic-educational, but also socio-cultural purposes; to such an extent that it is defined as an "educational methodology based on the use of narrative technique, exploited in its potential as a cognitive resource and social glue" (Affede, 2011, 19). Indeed, its historical connotation (Cataldo, 2011) enhances the cultural, territorial, and social potential of narrative. On the other hand, while identity must be constructed from scratch, it is constantly defined from a historical and social, natural, and cultural horizon. It is no coincidence that Sorzio and Bembich (2020, 63) define narrative as "a spontaneous and constitutive tendency of identity" that is expressed in narrative interaction according to three characteristics: subjectivity, self-construction, and contextual influence.

The latter aspect undoubtedly refers to the possibility of placing oneself 'in dialogue with' and on both individual and collective identity awareness/construction (Lounsbury et alii., 2019). In other words, storytelling allows the person to process and re-process events, generating connections, interpreting, and processing aspects of their own and others' experience (Clandinin, 2016).

From this perspective, the subject does not assume the position of passive receiver of information, but rather that of active constructor of his or her own knowledge (Di Paolo & Zollo, 2023).

It is strategic to exploit this educational methodology in adult education contexts - life-long learning (Affede 2011; Cuzzolin 2019; Pizzato 2019) also and above all because it uses the logic of learning by doing (Bandini, Petraglia, Sartori 2008; Cuzzolin 2019) capable of leveraging the plastic capacities of the over-55s' brains. In fact, it is well known that when a story is told, all the neuronal circuits are activated, to such an extent that it can be said that "we are literally made of stories" (Cappuccio & Fiandaca, 2020, 42).

Listening to a story allows the mind to activate scripts and patterns in a causal and systematic way. The former, have to do with the knowledge we have of events in

their ordinary and logical unfolding (script=copy); the latter have to do with the more properly abstract knowledge that is recalled (Cappuccio, Fiandaca, 2020, 45). Both scripts and patterns are constantly evolving because of daily experiences and relationships in both children and adults.

For these aspects mentioned, some authors have spoken of the promotion, through storytelling, of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) and cultural democracy (Bonacini, 2021). Moreover, as Bonacini (2021, 87) notes, the Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention) has definitively established that knowledge and use of heritage have the same value as all other human rights and, therefore, are part of the citizen's right to participate in cultural life. In this sense, "cultural engagement is consequently considered as part of the lifelong learning and education of every individual" (Bonacini, 2021, 87).

On the other hand, Bonacini (2020; 2021) is quick to point out that the community function of Storytelling is rightly among the eight functions identified:

1. community function: storytelling fosters the construction of community meaning.
2. Referential function: storytelling enables the transmission of knowledge and understanding.
3. Empathic function: narration arouses emotion and involvement.
4. Mnestic function: narration enables the tradition between generations of individual and collective memories.
5. Identity function: narration enables the construction of identity.
6. Value function: narration enables the transmission of values.
7. Trampoline function: narrative allows one to understand what may happen in the future through the reading of what happened in the past.
8. Connective function: narrative fosters the connection between institutions and heritage, individuals, and collectivity.

The aim of this study is to explicate an experience of continuing adult education which, within the framework of the Erasmus + project "Storytelling 55+ - Competence for active seniors", aimed firstly to train operators in the methodology of storytelling, and then to move on to a phase of qualitative data collection which took place through the running of workshops and the creation of two tools: an

operational one for running the workshop (card for the promotion of cultural storytelling) and one for collecting qualitative data from the stories (collection sheet). The latter enabled the interpretation and analysis of the data, which highlighted how important it can be to promote similar initiatives that aim at enhancing the identity and community dimension of the person, especially in the presence of an illness that complicates the possibility of drawing on knowledge and experiences relating to past and present events.

1. When the story becomes 'fragile'

The connection between storytelling and people suffering from Alzheimer's disease is not a recent one. Already in the 1990s, Kempers and colleagues (1995), for example, analysed the narrative and autobiographical abilities of people with Alzheimer's disease (AD) under two conditions: alone and in the presence of their spouse. The comparison of the results of this study showed an enhancement of narrative abilities in the presence of the dyad, as the spouse, being able to provide so many details about the stories, can stimulate the memories of their loved one.

Studies of this kind, although not recent, confirm both the functionality of the narrative-based methodology and its strong community and relational component.

In fact, the same conclusion is reached by the study by Hydén and colleagues (2013) who analysed feedback in storytelling involving people with Alzheimer's disease (AD) and how it correlates with how participants establish a 'common ground' (Clark 1996) in the interaction.

In other words, although it is very complicated to draw on knowledge and experiences related to past and present events, a capacity that is often hindered by the disease, it would seem that relationships, understanding, the creation and reworking of common events and experiences, and the support of the positive identities represented in the story find gratification and fulfilment in the creation of this common horizon of meaning that is built up during narrative activity.

One must consider that the term 'dementia' is an umbrella term that encompasses more than a hundred different illnesses. If we were to analyse Alzheimer's disease specifically, we could say that it is responsible for almost two thirds of all accidents over the age of 65. The typical duration of Alzheimer's is 8-10 years. Typically, the first symptoms are memory lapses and difficulty finding the right words. The symptoms worsen with time and the person becomes increasingly dependent on others in all daily activities, such as communicating, eating, going to the bathroom, changing clothes and so on (Glavind & Mogensen, 2022).

In fact, cognitive functions such as planning, memory and language skills used in storytelling are impaired in the presence of a neurodegenerative disease such as Alzheimer's or dementia; however, the person with dementia can utilise other resources in combination with still fully functional abilities. As mentioned above, while relationship and joint co-construction of the story act as a support, non-verbal and bodily aspects may represent an opportunity to enhance the communication skills of people with AD.

Indeed, as the ability to communicate through the linguistic expressive component diminishes, the person can make use of other semiotic resources, using his or her body to stage and physically represent memories of past events, moreover, he or she can make use of the semiotic and cognitive resources of the people involved in the narrative activity (Hydén, 2011; Medved, 2007).

Based on this assumption, Hydén (2009; 2010; 2013) cites some case studies, which he conducted, in support of the importance of paying attention to the different ways of expressing oneself in people with dementia. The author, who has long studied the relationship between illnesses such as dementia or Alzheimer's and the art of storytelling, refers specifically to two studies: the first based on the administration of paired interviews (caregiver-person with AD dyad); while the second concerning ethnographic research conducted in the field. Both research, served the scholar to note that most AD storytellers are seen as 'creative problem solvers', as in encountering or facing some kind of difficulty with respect to the flow of the storytelling, they try to find a practical solution, such as a switch to more practicable semiotic means (gestures, for example). "Problems with using spoken language may prompt the use of non-vocal semiotic resources - like gestures and bodily movements - to supplement, repair or even substitute for spoken words in a narrative. When gestures or bodily movements play a more prominent role or even substitute for words there will be a tendency towards an enactment of story rather than a re-telling" (Hydén, 2013).

All this entails for the storyteller on the one hand the possibility of emphasising the relationship between the participants in the narrative situation, rather than attempting to construct the events in the story world, and on the other hand the invitation to use non-speech semiotic resources, such as gestures and bodily movements, for instance, in order to supplement, enhance or even replace words in a narrative (Hydén, 2013).

More recent studies that have taken up the topic focus on 'fragile stories' or 'fragile storytelling' to point to the fact that people with Alzheimer's are easily distracted

from the topic of conversation and have a greater chance of losing the sense of coherence and continuity of the story, also calling into question the ability to adequately relate to the story being told (Glavind & Mogensen, 2022).

Also in this study, the authors used the ethnographic method to investigate the topic of fragile histories in depth. Specifically, Glavind and Mogensen conducted a study in Denmark from 2019 to 2021 with people with AD from which they found that: 1) non-verbal presence and interaction are crucial to capture the essence of the stories of people with AD; 2) the people who participated in the study also tried to tell stories through the verbal channel, so however fragmented they may be, their verbal expressions are still an endeavour to be supported, appreciated and nurtured. Thus, the authors suggest that operators and/or researchers be inspired by the concept of wayfinding proposed by Ingold (2000), so that they can accompany fragile stories by continuously putting themselves in the situation of being able to read, observe and analyse the changing ways of being of the person with Alzheimer's disease. By doing so, the researcher can help stories come to life not only by being present and listening patiently, but also by intuiting and completing (Glavind & Mogensen, 2022).

Indeed, people with Alzheimer's suffer a progressive loss of a sense of time, place, and words; thus, they incur the possibility of losing the ability to tell stories and create meaning and coherence over time, as well as future orientation and losing a sense of belonging to a wider community (Jackson, 2002). However, as studies have shown, people with AD do not stop trying to convey their stories. They fluctuate between different ways of being as the disease progresses, even within the same everyday life when 'good' and 'bad' moments alternate, and the symptoms of the disease are pronounced; when words come easily and when stories derail easily (Glavind & Mogensen, 2022).

2. “Storytelling 55+ - Competence for active senior” project

What has been described so far is at the core of an Erasmus + project which in the perspective of lifelong learning and active ageing is based on the combination of storytelling and people over 55. The reference is to the project "Storytelling 55+ - Competence for active seniors", realized by a European consortium of organisations from Poland, Slovenia and Italy within the framework of the Erasmus + programme, Adult Education, Action 2 Strategic Partnerships.

The project consists of the development of innovative outcomes and outputs for educators working with people over 55. The aim is to support the competences of seniors in the field of cultural storytelling.

The project partners are:

1) the Lublin Regional Tourism Organisation (LROT), an NGO whose mission is to create the image of Lublin Province as an attractive region in terms of nature and culture. LROT also plays an educational role related to education about the historical and cultural heritage of the region.

2) Ljudska univerza Rogaška Slatina (LURS), a non-profit adult education and training organisation.

3) the Union of Education and Labour Councilorships (UA), a Union of Municipalities founded in 2005, operating in Sicily and Southern Italy. The objective of the body is to improve the effectiveness of public spending in improving the welfare system, ensuring quality services and continuous improvement. To date, the Union has 31 member municipalities.

The project consists of the development of three macro-actions:

1) "Cultural Storytelling" training course for classroom scenarios for older people. The training, addressed to nine public and private social workers working with adults and older people in different capacities (educators, volunteers, pedagogues, managers, or operators of adult recreation centers), took place in Rogaška Slatina (Slovenia) from 16 to 22 October 2022. The main objective of the training course was to deepen methodologies, knowledge, and good practices in the field of adult education, using in particular cultural storytelling, for the promotion of the territory.

During the European training, the participants were able to acquire the theoretical and practical references of the Storytelling 55+ model and acquire specific skills for the organization and management of adult education courses exploiting the

storytelling methodologies implemented by the partnership. In fact, the training was based on the development of four thematic modules:

- module I - Introduction to storytelling.
- Module II - Local cultural heritage.
- Module III - Storytelling on the web.
- Module IV - Multimedia for the promotion of cultural heritage.

2) Creation of a tool: set of storytelling cards about the local cultural heritage. The cards aim to facilitate/guide the construction of stories about the local cultural heritage and reflection on its meaning. The cards were designed and produced to build an intergenerational dialogue (elderly-young people), based on a review of proven narrative structures and models, repeated in the most engaging stories. Cues, slogans, suggestions, questions contained in the cards become a pretext to tell or start a conversation, structuring and extracting 'hidden knowledge', especially on intangible heritage (knowledge, skills, practices, ideas, values, images, messages). Two sets of cards were produced, both consisting of 20 cards: one set is based on 'Local Culture and Tradition', the other on 'Physical Places and Folk Tradition'.

These were used to conduct three experiential workshops conducted with three groups of people over 55, one of which is described below. This phase ended on 30 June 2023.

3) Writing of a handbook/e-book: the last action of the project, which is currently in progress, aims at the development of a handbook in e-book format, the topics of which will be: the description of the method, the valorization of cultural heritage as a promoter of values, storytelling as a method for the promotion of cultural heritage, seniors as communicators of values, the advantages and benefits of intergenerational and intercultural dialogue, the collection of good practices.

3. Methodology used

The methodology used for the development of the workshops builds on a methodological framework developed by Cortese (1999, 79-154) in the field of business organisation. Although the reference context is not the same, the research phases identified by him using storytelling are methodologically expendable in other contexts.

Cortese suggests dividing the research process into three consecutive phases: collection, analysis, and interpretation of narrative content.

In this study, the first phase of data collection from the act of storytelling coincides with the second macro-action of the project, when the themes and the specific field subject of storytelling were identified, an instrument was created, and field experimentation was initiated through the introduction of three workshops conducted with people over 55.

Exactly as suggested by the author, the theme or spheres of reflection set in the tool created are neither too broad nor too narrow and, moreover, it has a carefully defined objective. Specifically, the cards always start with a general theme related to cultural and popular tradition, followed by two or three stimulus questions capable of prompting the beginning of the story and promoting intergenerational dialogue (specific objective).



Figure 1 (Example card - set 2 Culture and Traditions).

In defining the cards, another suggestion by Cortese (1999) proved to be fundamental: that of using the narrative interview, which implies the presence of a storyteller (the person involved) and a storytaker (the conductor/researcher) and which uses the agreed themes to develop an explicitly and consciously narrative dialogue.

Nevertheless, in the meeting with the participants, the story-gathering phase looked as much at the spontaneous, unguided stories that each storyteller shared with the researcher/host or with the group as at the stories "guided" by the active presence of a storytaker. In the former case, the advantage lies in the fact that the storyteller is not forced into the act of storytelling but has the disadvantage of prolonging the time of data collection; in the latter case, on the other hand, the narrative practice is more pragmatic and effective, but also more complex as it

requires the construction of an empathic and trusting connection between the storyteller and the storytaker. This is why it was decided to divide one of the workshops into two meetings, the first of which served as a preliminary warm-up to work on the relationship.

Cortese (1999, 91) also specifies that the sample must be representative of the population and must not exceed ten units in order to maintain the manageability of the data collected. Regarding the first remark just made, it is necessary to emphasise that in the case that follows, the sample was not based on a probabilistic sample, but one of convenience, since it is a pre-established group; however, the choice of not enlarging the target group very much was respected.

This is followed by the data analysis phase, which is based on the identification of micronarratives that need to be organised and interpreted. Cortese (1999, 108) suggests in this regard to use a collection sheet containing: the existential coordinates of the storyteller, such as name, professional role, organisation, and position within it; an integral or summary transcription of the story, the theme (or themes) that best define it, the protagonists, both with a central and secondary role. For the definition of the collection form, it was decided to fix the name, the personal characteristics that are visible or that the person chose to share during the warm-up meeting, the summary transcript of the story, the characters, and the themes.

The plots outlined can be categorised according to the canonical genres of the literary tradition: epic, tragic, comedy, romantic. According to the author, the cards must also contain a part in which the observer assesses the quality of the story. For these reasons, the collection sheet also includes the following indicators: narrative genre, plot articulation, description of details, aroused interest and deducible morals.

4. "Workshop Storytelling 55+": an experience at the Alzheimer Café in Palermo

Within the project's second action, workshops based on the use of Storytelling were promoted, developed between March and June 2023 by a few operators involved in the training carried out in Slovenia in accordance with the first action.

Specifically, a case study developed at the Alzheimer Café in Palermo¹ is reported below. This recreational facility welcomes people suffering from Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers. People are involved, on a weekly basis, in a variety of activities (from cognitive therapies to artistic, culinary, and cultural activities).

The Storytelling 55+ workshop took place on 27 June 2023, but was preceded by a Warmup meeting on 20 June 2023. Both meetings lasted two hours. The agenda of the meetings follows.

Warm up activities			Workshop		
Timetable	Activity	Actions	Timetable	Activity	Actions
16.00-16.15	Welcome and reception of participants	1) Providing for the incoming well-being of guests	16.00-16.15	Welcome and reception of participants	1) Providing for the incoming well-being of guests
16.15-16.45	Project presentation	1) Explain the purpose of the project. 2) Ensure that there are no doubts to avoid possible resistance from participants	16.15-16.45	Activity presentation	1) Explain the purpose of the workshop. 2) Ensure that there are no doubts to avoid possible resistance from participants
16.45-17.45	'Tell your story: one object a thousand words and gestures'	1) Write your name on a sheet of paper that is shared in a container. 2) Each participant draws a name and invites the person drawn to describe the object they brought to present their personal story.	16.45-17.45	'Tell your story: one card a thousand words and gestures'	1) Draw a card (each participant can change the card up to three times). 2) Tell a story from the stimulus question on the card.
17.45-18.00	Final feedback and convivial moment	1) Take note of the outgoing state of mind.	17.45-18.00	Final feedback and convivial moment	1) Take note of the outgoing state of mind.

Table 1 (Workshop Agenda).

The workshop was attended by 14 people over 55, the center's psychologist, the center's music therapist, two educators from the center and three volunteers from the National Civil Service, a conductor, and an observer.

¹ I would like to thank the "Associazione La Grande Famiglia Onlus" for their willingness and welcome in hosting the Storytelling 55+ project.

The meeting was video-recorded, and the participation of the center users was voluntary. Participants were provided with an authorization form for the processing of personal data and photos and videos for event reporting purposes. The creation of the target group for the proposed activity was based on the sole criterion of a minimum age of 55 (however, all accompanying persons of any age and all those present, including volunteers, actively participated in the workshop).

The warm-up meeting was based on the presentation of each member of the group. Participants were previously asked to bring an object to represent them. The object in this case acted as a stimulus for autobiographical storytelling; in fact, people let themselves be carried away by the game by submitting a personal story, which in some cases was emotional, considering the particular experiences of the people who took part in the meeting, in others more sympathetic and cheerful, and in others still full of melancholy for some loved ones no longer alive.

The most popular objects were photos representing family members, magnets representing trips, fruits of one's labor or accessories that are worn daily representing a particular moment or bond.

During the workshop, the group was invited to let themselves be carried away by the stories each person would tell. Through the cards containing stimulating questions, the moment of storytelling related to one's own social and cultural experience was initiated.

The themes of the stories were disparate, but had as a common background the social, cultural, and traditional local background. Each participant drew one or more cards each, telling their own story. Themes that came up included: food, the name of one's country, the feast day of the patron saint of the country, how to announce the birth of a child, the journey you would still like to take, what silence represents, childhood friends, work done, and kindergarten. The stories told were charged with emotion, culture, and legends.

In some cases, given the particular target group of people present at the meeting, words failed, but they were replaced by gestures, expressions, support from the group and/or the caregiver. Each story was greeted by a thank you for the shared experiences and experiences.

In order to facilitate a concise presentation of the collected data, a summary/example of the story collection forms is given below.

Storyteller	Story	Quality of the narrative
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Name	Visible features	Features narrated	Story	Characters	Theme(s)	Genre	Plot articulation	Description of Details	Interest raised	Moral
1	Male; attends the centre alone; brings drinks prepared by him; uses irony; seeks interaction.	He has lost a son, but does not want to talk about it; he has distant family members; he engages in numerous activities	He tells of the journey he wanted to make to discover the places in Tibet where his father was imprisoned during the Great War	Father; British military	Journeys	Epic	Excellent	Good	High	Lost time doesn't come back
2	Female; attends the centre thanks to the accompaniment of her son who, however, does not take an active part in the activity; dresses in very heavy clothes not perceiving the difference in seasons; very sociable.	She worked a lot at home and took care of her family and children for a long time	She recounts the traditional culinary dish from Palermo that her grandmother used to prepare for her	Grandmother, grandchildren and children	Food	Realistic	Poor	Poor	Medium	Handing on culinary traditions
3	Male; he attends the centre together with his wife who often substitutes for him by making up for his linguistic-expressive deficiencies; he often laughs and makes jokes.	He centres his speeches on his wife	He tells how he met his wife	Wife	friends	Romantic	Poor	Poor	Medium	Conveying the value of family and mutual support
4	Female; attends the centre together with her husband as caregiver; actively participates in activities; talkative, curious and sociable.	She talks a lot about her children and grandchildren and the business she and her husband have run for years	He recounts two episodes he experienced together with his granddaughter	Nephew; baker	Present	adventure	Excellent	Excellent	High	Conveying the value of time and respect for others
5	Male; attends the centre alone; alternates moments of lucidity with moments of absence.	He lost a son and spoke about it with awareness and resignation; he is still involved in the business his wife runs.	He tells the story of his Italian army soldier son who died in a car accident and what he does to honour his memory nowadays	Son, daughter, son's colleagues	Family	Tragic/sentimental	Excellent	Good	High	The importance of memory and accident prevention

Table 2 (Summary/example of the narrative content collection sheet).

Following are some text extracts from some significant stories.

Mr. M.'s story developed from the question "what is the trip you have never taken and would like to take?" His answer was: "I would have liked to go to Tibet to see where my father was imprisoned during the years of the Great War by the British. I was very young, one year old, and they took my father away from me for five years".

The story told by Mrs. R. evoked Palermo's culinary tradition, considering that her story revolves around her favourite dish: pasta with sardines and fennel; this is the dish that her grandmother used to cook for her and that she cooked for her children for years, although now "I can't make it any more... because what do you want, I'm old. I worked a lot and now I'm resting".

The story of a young civil service volunteer who, when asked 'what traditional folk clothes do you remember', replied 'my grandfather's clothes: baggy, because 'you

never know when you'll grow up and they won't fit anymore', patched because 'nothing can be thrown away, but everything can be recycled if you can' and which he has now forced me to put on Vinted to sell, but no one wants them and he gets angry too!"

The story of G. drawing the card focusing on the theme of friends and his response was: "I had many friends, Agostino, Giovanni... but I don't remember what we did, but if you want, I can tell you what I did with my wife!"

The story of A., a passionate grandmother who, when asked "what is the gift you remember and what would you give your grandchildren?" answered "I have given many things to my grandchildren, but the most precious gift you can give is time. I once gave a beautiful doll to my granddaughter; just the other day, I remembered how much she had wanted that toy and I asked her if she remembered that I had given it to her at the end of the school year for her promotion and she said, 'grandma I don't remember, but I remember when you got into the doll house with me and then you couldn't get out!'"

Conclusions

The two meetings, the collection and interpretation of the stories using the collection sheets, allowed certain dynamics and reflections to emerge, which far from being generalisable, denote the importance of conducting similar experiences. Once interpreted, the individual stories were compared with each other, with the aim of drawing general considerations in order to give the research an overall framework of meaning. Therefore, some of them are set out below:

- 1) the person with his/her experience is valorised and placed at the centre, experiencing an active role.
- 2) The caregiver's support is fundamental for the loved one. Whenever the story becomes "fragile", in fact, the caregiver is the person's point of reference, who through a look, a gesture or a linguistic expression is called upon to support the story.
- 3) In some cases, the caregiver tends to replace the person who is telling his or her story, denoting the degree of dependency achieved.
- 4) The conductor plays a crucial role both in the presence of a person with AD who is not accompanied by a loved one and at times when the caregiver or a participant does not leave room for the person who is trying to tell his or her story.

5) Emotional involvement is maximised with respect to the telling of one's own life stories.

6) The group becomes active in support of the story being told and empathises with each story if appropriately prompted.

7) Gestures, facial expressions, and silences accompany (replace) and emphasise certain parts of the story.

It should be emphasised that in the presence of qualitative and ethnographic research, if the validity of the process is ensured by the rigour of the method, its relevance, on the other hand, depends on further factors: the richness of the narrative data, the depth of the storyteller-storyteller relationship, the experiential involvement.

Every day we tell stories. Storytelling reinforces individual and collective identity, allows us to express emotions, feelings, encourages the processing and reworking of facts and events, and when words fade away, gestures, expressions, silence take over, but never oblivion.

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