



# Authentic Partnership Approach

## What is an Authentic Partnership?

An Authentic Partnership actively incorporates and values diverse perspectives and includes persons with dementia, partners in care, and professional partners directly in decision making. Authentic Partnerships mean working with others, not for others.

## What are the Guiding Principles for Authentic Partnerships?

### 1) Genuine Regard for self and others:

This principle focuses on recognizing and enhancing the personhood of all those involved in the partnership by: recognizing and upholding human rights, valuing and being valued, knowing others and being known, fostering others' growth and development, and being truly open to others' experiences.

#### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- How can we include the contributions of others in decision-making?
- How can I get to know others in the partnership and help them know me?
- What strengths does each person bring to the partnership?
- How can I feel valued in this partnership?

### 2) Synergistic Relationships:

This principle focuses on interdependence and reciprocity, shared mutual learning, building trust, and openness to others' perspectives, opinions, and ideas. It recognizes that we are often stronger when we harness the group's collective strengths.

#### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What are the collective assets of the group?
- Who is included in this group, who is missing?
- How do we support all partners in sharing their perspectives and strengths?
- How can we build and maintain trust?
- How can we incorporate all contributions?

### 3) Focus on the Process:

Focusing on the process allows for new learnings to emerge throughout the process, and not just at the end. When we honour this principle, we view learning as an ongoing, never ending process. This principle requires openness to “unlearning” and new learnings, flexibility, and patience.

#### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- How do I feel when I have to change direction?
- Have we considered all possibilities?
- Do we take time on a regular basis to critically reflect on our approach?
- Who benefits from our approach and who is disadvantaged?
- What can we learn/unlearn from this?

## How Do we Enable and Support Authentic Partnerships? (Five enablers)

### 1) Connect and Commit:

Connecting and committing involves the bringing together a diverse group of partners who collectively determine goals for the partnership. The needs, roles, and expectations of each partner are discussed and the strengths and resources of each member are explored. Mutually agreed upon guidelines for supporting the partnership are created.

#### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Who will (or will not) be included in the partnership? Why?
- What supports might members need in order to be meaningfully engaged?
- What are our roles, responsibilities, expectations and goals?

### 2) Create a Safe Space:

Connecting and committing involves the bringing together a diverse group of partners who collectively determine goals for the partnership. The needs, roles, and expectations of each partner are discussed and the strengths and resources of each member are explored. Mutually agreed upon guidelines for supporting the partnership are created.

#### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- How might we promote, and gauge, the emotional and physical comfort of each partner?
- How might we nurture supportive relationships with each partner?

### 3) Value Diverse Perspectives:

Valuing diverse perspectives entails appreciating the contributions of all partners and respecting different types of participation. It involves demonstrating how partners' insights have been acted upon and viewing differences of opinions as opportunities for growth.

#### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- How might we demonstrate that we value all perspectives and contributions?
- How might we resolve differences of opinions?

### 4) Establish and Maintain Open Communication:

Open communication is established by using accessible language, allowing people time to communicate, clarifying meanings, keeping all partners 'in the loop' and by providing a range of ways for partners to communicate.

#### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- How do we ensure that all partners have the opportunity and time to contribute?
- What are some different communication strategies (verbal, non-verbal, technological, creative) we can use to enhance participation?

### 5) Conduct Critical Reflection and Dialogue:

Critical reflection and dialogue involves taking the time for each person, and the group, to think about how their approach is contributing towards building authentic partnerships.

#### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- How can we build regular reflection and dialogue into each meeting?
- What is (and is not) working well?
- What are the positive and negative implications of our work (for example, who does and does not benefit?)
- How could we strengthen the partnership?