



## Colin the Companion Cub

*Alzheimer counselling chats – therapeutic tool*



Thus, the focus is not on psychological restoration; rather on recreation: not completion but companionship, assistance (being there) and comfort.

The process as recreational companionship may follow a gradual *progressive pattern* throughout the chats:

- **Recreative** companionship – being with and helping the ASP experience a positive psychological climate.
- **Reconstructive** care – helping ASP holding on to a small substance ('teaspoon full of sugar').
- **Regenerative** comfort – guiding ASP towards behaviour that makes a difference to them (even per counselling chat).

### Counselling on two dimensions:

- Empowering the **patient** (client) with Alzheimer Syndrome (ASP).
- Guidance to the **family** in coping with the situation of AS.

*The focus for the chats is within a **counselling context**. Thus, it is recommended that a family member or caregiver should assist the ASPs with the use of the companion cub. The ASPs may be guided / trained gradually to use the cub on their own later on.*

### Specific focal points within the counselling experience:

- Providing handles to assistants (family members, caregivers).
- Focusing on understanding and mitigating the symptoms.
- Sensitised to acknowledge and address transition between phases.
- Training assistants in coping skills and making a difference.
- Providing companionship and comfort to the ASP.
- Multi-method approach: companion cub/snippet of music/subconscious message/'teaspoon full of sugar' – small substantial point to get across.

Counselling process informed by the *ground rationale*: as a condition, AS cannot be healed, arrested or turned around.

### The focus for counselling chats:

- The sight framework of the ASPs: what **attracts their attention**?
- The basic needs of the ASPs: what is their **immediate wants**?

Provide **silent guidance**, ensuring **human dignity** and **engaging the ASP through elementary/rudimentary interaction with the companion cub**.

- Human dignity, within the scope of people with AS.
- Avoiding the universal view on human dignity and human rights – overstretched expectations and increased stress.
- Avoid perception of 'geriatric infancy'; rather **focus on empowerment**.
- **Avoid** highlighting issues that must be 'addressed' or **instigating negative feelings**.
- Focus on **moment-to-care** basis catering for basic needs and providing **immediate comfort**.
- Counselling chats focus on relaxing the psychological climate through **here and now companionship**. Thus, indirectly handling feelings (fear, anxiety, anger, aggression, distraction, confusion, etc.)
- Avoid **rationalisation or problem-solving**; focus on the **immediate experience** through the five senses (which is affected less by cognitive damage).

## Preliminary structure of counselling chats (four phases):

1. **Run the routine:** help establish a familiar environment:
  - Start every chat de novo – introducing Colin the cub.
  - Involve the assistant: caregiver/family member to make ASP comfortable, switching on the chat at first.
  - Depending on the phase of AS, the patient can be shown how to use the mechanism.
2. **Set the scene:** Explain in simple terms the theme of the chat.
  - Use need builder – focus on ASP's basic wants and perspective.
  - The companion cub invites the ASP into the situation.
3. **Share the view:** Use the theme to broaden the ASP's scope.
  - Provide piecemeal information on the theme.
  - Use music to help instil a positive psychological atmosphere.
4. **Sow the seed:** Empower the ASP with 'teaspoon full of sugar'
  - Provide positive experience to take away,
  - Focus on coping climate through companionship.
  - Provide (if possible) 'mantra' that is inculcated into the subconscious.
  - Companion cub ends the chat by graceful exit (to establish boundary).



## During chats:

- **Avoid cross-references in chats:** 'Remember when ...?'
- **Avoid negative inclinations** – attempting to rectify issues or solving problems.
- **Focus on selfless companionship and comfort:** being there and sharing wonder moments.
- **Focus on voice tone of companion cub – tone down inflections or dramatisation.**
- **Presented in a caring and comforting tone.**
- **The identity of the companion cub is downplayed** – merely **Colin the cub**, not Grizzly or bear, which may evoke negative emotional experiences.

## Matrix of chats – focusing on the five senses (which is not/less affected by the AS condition)

### 20 chats (5X4)

<b>SIGHT</b>	sunset	mountains	wild flowers	pets
<b>HEARING</b>	birds	ocean	night time	children
<b>SMELL</b>	flowers	baked bread	mother	earth after rain
<b>TASTE</b>	breakfast	fruits	Pudding	drink
<b>FEEL/TOUCH</b>	rain on the face	soft breeze	loving pet	someone's hand

- **Focusing on the five senses.**
- **Linking it to feelings and behaviour.**
- **Connecting it with basic needs** and wants.
- The **sight can be linked to associated sound**; for the rest, thematic music would suffice.
- **Broadening the scope** and **providing moment-to-care guidance.**

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