

CASE STUDY: Steve

Our Client

Steve is an 88 year old retired pilot who has vascular dementia. Steve lives with his wife Anne, who is his primary care giver.

Some time ago, Steve was highly anxious and easily agitated. He was insecure and attached to Anne, who could barely be left alone even to visit the toilet. As soon as Anne was out of sight Steve would become paranoid and aggressive – convinced she was leaving him. Anne was becoming burned out by the demands of 24/7 care. Soon Anne was at breaking point. Steve was prescribed anti-psychotic medication which failed to reduce his episodes of challenging behaviour whilst adversely affecting his cognitive and physical abilities.

Our Service

Using the ground-breaking SPECAL method, we explored Steve's past and found that he could still access many positive memories of his time as a pilot. When we referenced aeroplanes or flying, Steve would swing his arm in a wide arc and say with pride, 'I flew around the world, you know.' Using verbal cues, we found we could quickly and easily take Steve back to the good old flying days, and when he was held in this good place he was no longer an elderly frightened and frightening man with dementia, but became a thirty something dashing pilot, king of his world.

However, Steve would still become very upset and angry if he felt that Anne had gone somewhere without him, and this posed a great challenge to the care team – Anne needed a decent break and we had to facilitate this without upsetting Steve. Using information from the distant past, we found that Anne had once owned her own floristry business. Although Steve had always been incredibly proud of his wife's achievements,

his own position as MD of a large international company had ensured that he was never particularly concerned about Anne's comparatively 'small' enterprise.

The next time Steve asked where Anne was, the carer explained that Anne was sorting out a problem at the shop. Steve smiled fondly and rolled his eyes as if to say 'thank goodness I've not been dragged along'. Once the twin themes of Steve's flying and Anne's need to solve problems at the shop had been shown to be entirely acceptable to Steve, Anne was able to take a two week holiday in France with her daughter whilst our carers held the fort with Steve.

The SPECAL method is designed to work positively with dementia, rather than trying to defeat or ignore it, and has been shown to enable people to stay at home for longer, experience increased levels of wellbeing and take less medication.

Our Success

Steve continues to live in the comfort and familiarity of his own home. He no longer takes anti-psychotic medication, and his former outbursts of agitation rarely occur. Anne is no longer a worn out caregiver; she takes a regular day out with her daughter, and enjoys an occasional holiday abroad, which enables her to recharge her batteries and sustain her role as Steve's loving wife.

"The Good Care Group has enabled me to make time for myself, meaning that when I spend time with Steve I can give him the love, care and attention that he deserves. The approach that they have taken through SPECAL has really worked for Steve" – Steve's wife, Anne