

# Book review

## Developing a Relational Model of Care for Older People: Creating Environments for Shared Living

**Edited by James Woodward and Jenny Kartupelis  
Jessica Kingsley  
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“Relationships” are all the rage in the world of older people’s care homes, which is a great news, but makes you wonder what has been going on in residential care all these years.

This new book by Canon James Woodward and Jenny Kartupelis, Director of Faith in Society and Strategy, is based in their own spirituality and draws on their “faith” that residential care could and should be much more enriching for older people. In essence, they ask, can we return to the true meaning of the word “caring” as something that is loving and connected rather than simply transactional?

Collective living in a care home should ideally be about sharing in later life as a positive choice, rather than a place that many people dread. To make that happen needs a renewed focus in care homes on those interactions and connections with other people that all of us thrive on, throughout our lives.

The book reports on a UK study of how relationships in older people’s care homes affect their feeling of security, health and enjoying a meaningful life. Its results and their implications are featured throughout *Developing a Relational Model of Care for Older People: Creating Environments for Shared Living*.

In including relational and spiritual needs, it offers a fresh look at how all of us can relate to and care for older people. Drawing on the research by Jenny Kartupelis, in which she conducted over 100 in-depth interviews with people at Abbeyfield Society care homes, it

explores the nature of interpersonal relationships, their critical effect and the factors which affect their formation, and goes on to propose a new approach based on nurturing particular types of relationship.

The richness of insights from these interviews make the book both a stimulating read and a practical tool for all involved with residential care. Listening to older people is central to its methodology and messages. Quotes and snapshots tease out key themes, concluding with identifying key components of excellence in a care home.

This book should be required reading for anyone choosing a care home for themselves or a family member – and obviously also for those leading the care sector, including the regulators and everyone managing or working in a care home.

It provides a real challenge to the way that the residential care market for older people is developing. Increasingly in England we are seeing a two-tier market where some people can afford to pay £1,000 plus a week for care in quality settings. But the lessons of this book are surely that relationships matter wherever you live and whoever is funding it.

Of course, I am delighted that it also nods towards the increasing number of models of intergenerational care that United for All Ages is promoting in the UK, from care home nurseries to shared or co-housing, and where interactions between older and younger people are intrinsic to daily-life routines. The benefits can be seen to be both mutual and reciprocated.

It is these kinds of relationships that this book celebrates and which are surely central to the success of all excellent care homes.

### **Stephen Burke**

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