

# The ABC Group for Caregivers of Persons Living with Dementia: Self-help based on the Conversational and Enabling Approach

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## **Abstract:**

### *Background*

The ABC Group is different from other self-help groups, as well as from psycho-educational groups and the support groups usually organized by the parents associations of Alzheimer patients. The ABC Group is an original self-help group, led by a professional leader, addressed to caregivers of persons living with dementia, based on a new method developed in Italy, presented here for the first time in English: Conversational and Enabling Approach (CEA).

### *The ABC Group*

The CEA is based on focusing the attention on the words exchanged between patient and caregiver during daily life and aims at favouring verbal expression in spite of the speech impairment and the deterioration of the communication function of speech, caused by dementia. In this way CEA aims at helping for the well-being (possible happiness) of both the caregiver and the patient.

The main components of CEA are here described: the Conversational Approach, the point of view of Multiple Identities and of Disidentity, The Elementary Competencies, and the Enabling Approach.

The ABC Group is based on the Twelve Steps proposal. They constitute the synthesis of CEA adapted to the caregiving practice.

### *A pilot study*

This pilot study is carried out through two ABC groups led following the CEA and a control group. Group A consists of 10 caregivers and 4 group sessions within a 6 weeks period, group B consists of 8 caregivers and 6 group sessions within 8 weeks, and the control group consists of 7 caregivers who have taken part to two informative sessions separated by 8 weeks.

The trial objective is the evaluation of the effectiveness of the ABC Group in modifying the Verbal Behavior of the caregivers, in the sense of greater adherence to the Twelve Steps. Furthermore the trial evaluates the changes of the Verbal Behavior of the patients and of the Caregiver Burden.

### *Conclusions*

The results of this pilot study suggest the effectiveness of the ABC Group in modifying the Verbal Behavior of the caregivers, in the sense of greater adherence to the Twelve Steps. The Verbal Behavior of the patients and the Caregiver Burden of the caregivers appear unmodified.