

LOVE

THE LAST CHAPTER

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR
NURSING STUDENTS AND TRAINEES



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Written to accompany the feature-length version of “Love: The Last Chapter” (2021, Keller Media and the National Film Board of Canada).

INTRODUCTION

According to the Holistic Care model, one should practice healing the whole person as its goal. Fundamentally, all individuals are to be treated fairly and their needs and beliefs are to be taken into account, rather than their physical ailments. Support, connection, love and intimacy are still important in the lives of older adults. As a nursing student, it is important to recognize that aging is a normal part of the life cycle and, therefore, explore topics that demonstrate quality of life at every age (Touhy & Jeff, 2013). In the lives of older adults who reside in long-term care, retirement residents and/or in the community, nurses act as advocates to help get patients the resources and supports that they need, including collaborating with the residents’ families, social workers, and other support networks. Understanding the fundamental needs of older adults will ensure that they will receive the proper support they need to maintain their independence as they age (Eliopoulos, 2013).

The film ‘**Love: The Last Chapter**’ (Keller Media & The National Film Board of Canada) shows us what love and intimacy means to older adults, and how intimacy has an impact in well being. Love is an active power that alleviates isolation and loneliness, providing the feeling of unity and security. At a time in life when there is an abundance of loss, grief and major life changes, the quality of life of older adults who feel unwanted and unloved are at risk. Isolation and loneliness have been shown to affect the mental, and physical health of older adults tremendously (Nicholson, 2012). Nurses have a responsibility to assess for isolation and loneliness and to encourage the growth of love.

'Love: The Last Chapter' illuminates many topics explored in the nursing classroom:

1. How the stereotype of older adults as non-intimate is false and how conversations need to be held around the topic of late-life love to combat this narrative.
2. How a life imbued with deep social connections can envelop older adults' limited time full of meaning.
3. How intimacy, love and support can contribute to the mental and physical well-being of older adults.
4. How the experience of love among older adults includes childlike playfulness and the intimate exchange of words and touch, especially as other sensations are diminishing.

This film gives intimate snippets in the lives of older adults. Through understanding the personal experiences of older adults regarding love, social connections and intimacy, nursing students will be able to break harmful stereotypes of this population and help the older adults of today and of the future reach their full potential in later life.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss characters from the film in terms of the support that they receive:
 - a. How do their health concerns differ? How does each character navigate their changes in health in terms of the support that they receive from the people who love them?
 - b. What kind of support did their loved ones provide? What can you learn from these scenarios, and how can you apply it in a nursing setting?
2. How does the movie open your eyes to the topic of finding love in late-life? How did the movie help you overcome unrealized biases and stereotypes that you had with regards to older adults and love/intimacy, if any?
3. The film has given you a glimpse of what life is like inside a long-term care facility. In the film, what services were available in the dwelling that were beneficial for the older adults? How did the staff encourage the growth of love and building of social connections between its residents? Additionally, what were some of the struggles and barriers that the older adults experienced?
4. Think about the gendered experience of love and aging. How do you think the experience of losing one's spouse differs between genders? What kind of support is needed through grief?



GROUP EXERCISES

1. The characters in the film have different stories and challenges in their love life. Choose one character and identify what support that they have received from their loved ones and how it has helped them in terms of achieving personal needs and pursuing their own conception of optimal health (or help them deal with a chronic condition).
2. Suggest interventions for those at risk of social isolation. What specific methods can be used to foster social connectedness in the lives of older adults?
3. One goal of the film is to encourage transformative learning. As a nursing student, reflect on how viewing the film could help you to better care for and respect older adults in terms of their need for intimacy, love, social connections and other human needs. Which attitudes and actions of health care providers can have a negative effect on the building of social connections between older adults? Which can have a positive effect?
4. Consider socialization and the fostering of relationships within a long-term care community from a public health point of view. What opportunities are typically available to engage older adults with one another? From what you've seen in the film, what new knowledge can you use to implement change within your community?



ADDITIONAL READING

Brownie, S., & Horstmanshof, L. (2011). The management of loneliness in aged care residents: an important therapeutic target for gerontological nursing. *Geriatric Nursing*, 32(5), 318-325

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Rheaume, C., & Mitty, E. (2008). Sexuality and intimacy in older adults. *Geriatric Nursing*, 29(5), 342-349.

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Touhy, T. A., & Jett, K. F. (2013). *Ebersole & Hess' Toward Healthy Aging-E-Book: Human Needs and Nursing Response*. Elsevier Health Sciences

Eliopoulos, C. (2013). *Gerontological nursing*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins

Nicholson, N. R. (2012). A review of social isolation: an important but underassessed condition in older adults. *The journal of primary prevention*, 33(2-3), 137-152.

DISCUSSION SHEETS MADE POSSIBLE BY



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