

Second-person Relations Formed during the Course of Elderly Care

– How care workers cooperate with senior citizens –

UEDA Eriko

Graduate School of Science for Human Services, Ritsumeikan University

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This paper focuses on people engaged in elderly care and considers the significance of nursing for care workers.

The author interviewed 16 people using the semi-structured interview method, and she herself was also interviewed by a third person. The author then transcribed these interviews. The resulting data and details were assessed by the author by using the KJ method.

The results were classified into six categories. It was found that care workers often discover a much richer human nature than previously thought in senior citizens under care. This is because both care workers and senior citizens can co-create mutual and interactive understanding. Therefore, the author decided to refer to a senior citizen and a care worker in this case as “You” and “I,” respectively, in order to clarify the new phase of the situation. The author refers to this reciprocal situation as “second-person” relations. This new expression helped to develop deeper insight into work involving care for the elderly.

Thus, now the two people can cooperate by sharing the same feelings. This “You” and “I” situation produced favorable conditions and relations.

This does not immediately eradicate the imbalance in position between care workers and cared-for senior citizens. Yet, second-person relations, when created, promote trust, affection, hospitality, and understanding between two people—though not all care workers are working with this idea in mind. An agreeable balance is kept in the relationship, and a pleasant resonance, both spiritual and physical, is produced. Finally, the perception of this resonance can become internalized in the two people involved, who can then consider this resonance as “one’s own place”—a place where one can feel accepted and validated.