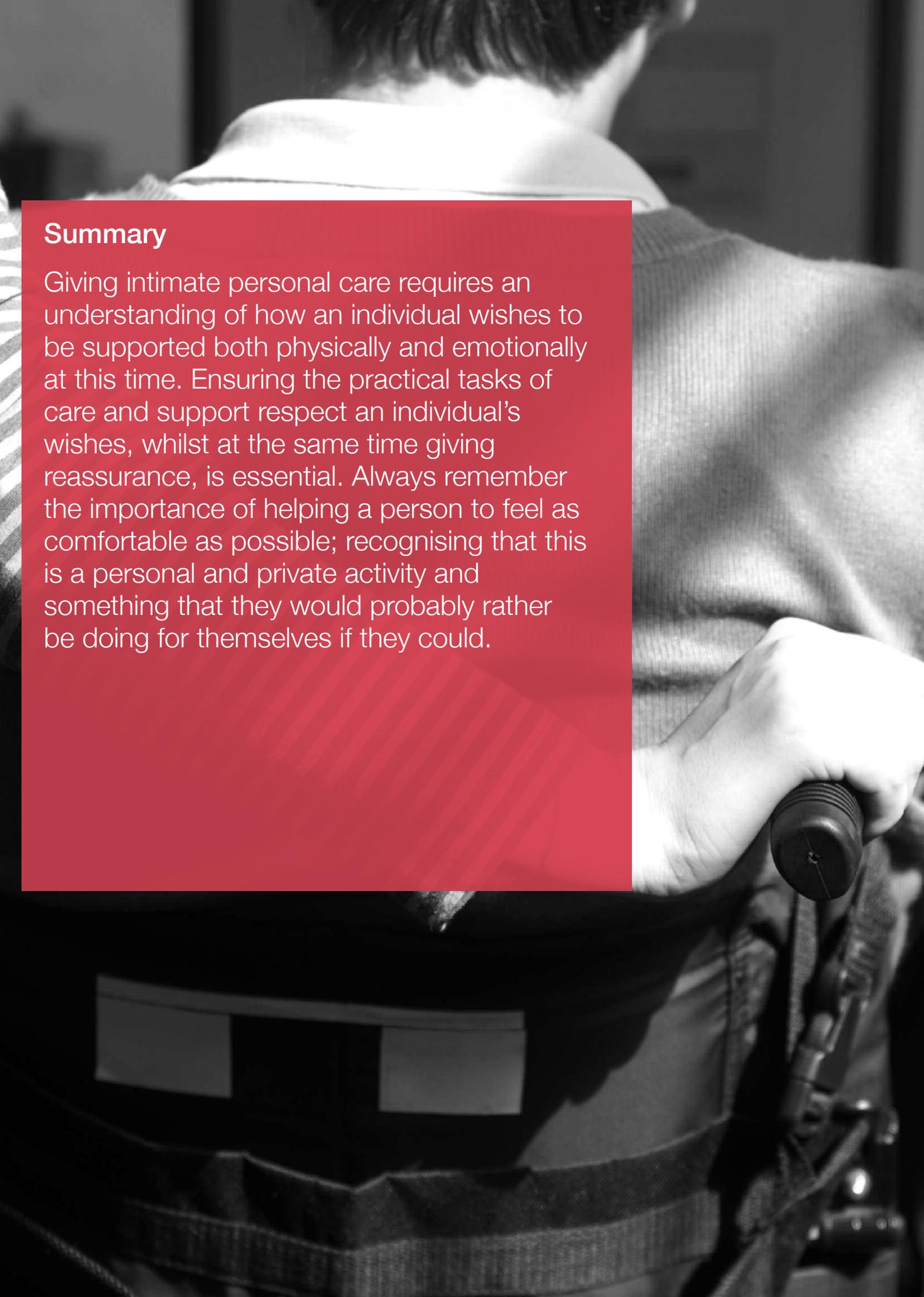




Principles to practice
Principle 4
Recognise and respect
how an individual's
dignity may be affected
when supported with
their personal care

Summary

Giving intimate personal care requires an understanding of how an individual wishes to be supported both physically and emotionally at this time. Ensuring the practical tasks of care and support respect an individual's wishes, whilst at the same time giving reassurance, is essential. Always remember the importance of helping a person to feel as comfortable as possible; recognising that this is a personal and private activity and something that they would probably rather be doing for themselves if they could.



Good practice scenario

Situation

Carers supporting a young man who had acquired a recent physical disability following a motorcycle accident and is paralysed from the neck down.

Supporting him in his own home in the mornings to bath, which he had indicated he preferred to showering. The man said he found the situation very embarrassing and awkward. He was supported to maintain his dignity by:

- Reassuring him that many people were supported in this way every day.
- Asking him who he would prefer to support him – whether he preferred a male or female and if there were other things that were important to him.
- Asking him about his routines. For example if he shaved before he got in the bath, when he preferred to clean his face and teeth and when he washed his hair.
- Discussing options that would make him feel less awkward and suggesting using a flannel and plenty of bubble bath to cover him.
- Ensuring his privacy by closing the door and drawing the blinds as soon as the man got into the room before undressing.
- Being aware of the temperature of the room and ensuring he was comfortable with both the air and water temperature.
- Having warm towels ready for when he got out of the bath.

Dilemma

You are supporting a gentleman who is doubly incontinent and wears incontinence aids. He is currently in the communal lounge area joining in a musical activity. Another resident has said quite loudly that this gentleman ‘smells’. You have discretely suggested to the gentleman that he may wish to be supported to go to the bathroom; however he declines and says that he is fine.

- How would you respond to this situation whilst maintaining the dignity of the gentleman and of the other residents in the area?
- How would you respond to the resident who is complaining about the smell?
- How might you avoid this from happening in the future?
- Once in the bathroom, how would you support the gentleman with his personal care to uphold his dignity? What things would you need to take into account?

“Who sets the standards around personal hygiene? Who decides when clothes need changing or hair needs washing? Who decides what’s too dirty and not acceptable?”

Care and support worker

“When asked by the care agency, my dad opted for young female carers. He didn’t really understand what they’d be doing and no one explained that they’d be supporting him to shower. When he realised he was so embarrassed, so my husband had to help him instead”

Carer

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