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**Reclaiming art! Creative expression as a building block in our social foundations**

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**Title of the presentation: Drama workshops as a place to expose the self and to meet the Other**

**Keywords: Drama workshop, Reality, Interaction**

### **Abstract**

In many nursing homes, daily work is shaped by tasks that can be measured—metrics and efficiency dominate the reality of care. Yet, human encounters, especially with people living with dementia, resist such quantification. Our contemporary age often embraces a technical worldview that seeks to capture reality through an “absolute language.” In contrast, drama workshops offer a space to explore what is ineffable—the subtle, emotional dimensions of human interaction.

*The Skills for Meaningful Encounters in Nursing Homes* project, funded by ESR+, aims to strengthen professionals’ ability to interact with individuals affected by memory disorders. One key component of this project is **Dramatic Methods and Experiential Learning**, which uses artistic and drama-based approaches.

In these workshops, employees reenact real-life situations that have been challenging in their work communities. By dramatizing these encounters, participants can pause, reflect, and examine the multiple layers of interaction—emotional, relational, and ethical.

This presentation focuses on the artistic workshops carried out in nursing homes as part of the project. It demonstrates how the use of drama not only improves interactions with residents but also creates space to understand that the idea behind care interactions can be changed.

Mini-CV: Riku Laakkonen is a puppeteer, director, actor, and teacher. After studying at DAMU (Theatre Academy of Music and Art) in Prague, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, and Turku University of Applied Sciences he has been working with both professionals and amateurs. He is one of the founder members of the Centre of Stage Animation Research (founded 2007). He started his artistic doctoral studies at the Tampere University in August 2020. Now he works as a researcher in a project called *The Skills for Meaningful Encounters in Nursing Homes*.