

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

Anxiety Reducing Activities

Activities that help to reduce or distract the person with dementia from outbursts or reactive behaviours, anxiety or restlessness. Encourage exercises that help expend extra energy and promote relaxation. Repetitive activities such as brisk walks, cleaning the counter and sorting objects are particularly effective, especially in the later stages of the illness.

Calming Activities

Due to reduced capacity to process information, people with dementia often feel overwhelmed by their environment. Calming activities such as listening to soft music, pet therapy, massages, or aromatherapy help to promote relaxation.

Activities of Daily Living

Activities that maintain current skills and encourage the person with dementia to feel useful and independent. This category also includes grooming, such as dressing oneself, and doing chores in and around the house such as sweeping the floor and weeding the garden.

Old Roles

Activities that help to maintain or re-establish self-esteem by providing continuity in the life of the person with dementia through activities that are familiar to them. For example, continuing with hobbies, walking to a former place of work or doing household chores.

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Creative Activities – Including Music and Art

These activities provide an outlet for emotions, self-expression, and an opportunity for communication through artistic mediums. They also provide a connection to the outside world and can stimulate conversation and bring back pleasant memories and emotions. They are especially important when the person with dementia can no longer communicate verbally. For example, listening to music, scrapbooking, painting, or visiting an art gallery.

Reminiscing

Focuses on past memories (long-term) to help the person with dementia remember the good times. It provides an opportunity to recall the past and re-experience the emotions attached to these memories. Reminiscing can also help to stimulate conversation.

Reminiscing Kit – Memory Box

These kits, or boxes, contain images and/or objects that help stimulate memories from the past. Tailor these kits to reflect the past interests of the person with dementia. Try to include as many of the five senses as possible. For example, objects that you can manipulate, feel, and smell.

See next page for some examples of possible memory boxes.

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Examples of memory boxes:

OFFICE MEMORY BOX		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencils, eraser, ruler • Old telephone • Junk mail • Typewriter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printed sheets of paper • File folders • Envelopes • Rubber bands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invoices/sales slips • Rubber stamps • Calculator • Paper clips
COOKING / BAKING MEMORY BOX		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whisk • Spices (to smell) • Oven mitt • Cookie cutters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apron • Measuring cups • Rolling pin • Plastic bowls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cookbook • Wooden spoon • Pots and pans • Non-electric mixer
CARPENTRY MEMORY BOX		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool box • Tape measure • Folding ruler • C-clamp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auger (no bit) • Sandpaper • Planer (no blade) • Piece of wood with small holes to put in screws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screwdriver, screws • Nuts & bolts to assemble • Carpenter's apron • Carpenter's pencil

Half-Done Activities

Any activity that is started or half-completed, and that motivates the person with dementia to finish it. These activities do not require instruction and promote independence. For example, leave a laundry basket in the hallway where some of the towels are already folded, a dinner table with only some of the plates and silverware set in the right place.

Sensory Activities

Activities that utilize at least one of the five senses in order to maintain a connection with people and their surroundings. They may also elicit pleasant feelings or memories. For example, aromatherapy, massage, or a sensory bag.

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Sensory Bag

An activity where the person with dementia tries to identify objects in a bag by touch without looking at them.

Kim's Game (memory game with bag)

A memory activity in which the person with dementia witnesses the caregiver put objects into a bag, then tries to recall the objects. Clues can be given to help the person remember (e.g. "This object is useful when drinking" (answer: a cup)).

**Many thanks to Tracey Leslie, Recreation Therapist, for her contribution to this handout.*

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