



A-Z of Activities

Reminiscence

The theory and principles of reminiscence

Reminiscing or recalling past events is something we all enjoy. There are things you can do to help residents reminisce as part of a daily activity.

However, be aware that reminiscence therapy is different. It is a specific technique that should be left to suitably trained people who are experienced in dealing with the emotions that might come up for people.

See the checklist on how to use reminiscence.

What the activity can do for the residents	What do you need?	What to be aware of
<p>Movement – sitting, standing, walking and grip, reaching, moving and lifting in order to handle objects and props.</p> <p>Sensory – stimulates all five senses.</p> <p>Emotional – opportunity to tell your story, recalling and sharing past events, people and roles. Shared memories can connect people. Provokes a range of emotions.</p> <p>Cognitive – recognising pictures and materials, recalling events and people.</p> <p>Social – interaction, communication and collaboration, can be fun.</p>	<p>Facilities An appropriate space – create a relaxed atmosphere, which encourages communication and social interaction; emphasise the personal memories, not historical accuracy.</p> <p>There are commercial materials available but staff, relatives and visitors may be able to provide items of interest.</p> <p>Staff/skills You should communicate clearly, actively listen and be encouraging and supportive. Ask open questions to encourage discussion. Highlight shared experiences – where they lived, the type of work they did.</p>	<p>Be aware that people may not wish to reminisce about stressful periods or aspects of their life – in which case, respect their wishes.</p> <p>If a resident becomes distressed when remembering certain events, give them the time and comfort needed to feel calm.</p>



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How to use reminiscence

- Link activities to an appropriate season or event (for example, discuss days at the seaside during a hot, sunny summer).
- Relate current news to past events and highlight changes and similarities.
- Carry out familiar daily living and leisure activities, even if they have not been done for some time. For example, polishing shoes, looking at magazines, or winding wool.
- Use food and drink to prompt memories.
- Stimulate all the senses. For example, when discussing days at the seaside, smell seaweed, play ball games, touch sand and shells, look at old postcards, listen to *'Oh, I do like to be beside the seaside!'* and taste candyfloss or winkles.
- Produce 'rummage' boxes and bags. You could fill them with tools and materials related to a resident's work (for example, buttons, tools and different fabrics for a dressmaker).
- Work with individuals (including relatives if appropriate) to devise a personalised scrapbook and/or reminiscence box.
- Create a lifescape. These are three-dimensional collages using different materials to represent an individual's interests or life experiences. Glue photocopies of certificates, postcards, lace, beads or any other materials onto card.
- Theatre groups.
- Develop links with local schools, radio stations and newspapers – residents may be able to assist in intergenerational oral history projects.
- Forge links with local libraries and museums. They often lend materials and boxes of themed objects, and may run training in reminiscence work.