

Activities – The Dementia Friendly Way

A dementia friendly activity is an activity that is carried out with the aim of supporting communication, stimulating the senses and anchoring the person back to familiar roles or memories that will create joy.

Communication: Consider how the activity can support communication – both verbal and non-verbal. Is the activity best carried out alongside each other or face to face? Consider the person's eyesight and position yourself to maximise their ability to understand what you say. When comprehension is limited, demonstrate the activity so it can be copied, or place your hand on theirs to show them how. Keep your body language open and soft, and a smile on your face.

Role: Consider how the activity stimulates memory of a valued role the person has/had– e.g. mother, father, home-maker, gardener, plumber. Consider how this role can be validated and memories stimulated throughout the activity.

Senses: Consider how each sense can be stimulated throughout the activity, or if you'll focus on one or two senses and maximise the engagement in those.

Sight: Consider what the person can see during the activity. Is it something that can be carried out outside where the person can be in nature? Can you include contrast and bright colours to stimulate their sight? How much natural light is in the area where you'll carry out the activity? Are there familiar things that the person can see during the activity – pictures on the wall, trees in the garden? Think about your chosen activity and what the person will be looking at for the duration.

Hearing: Consider what the person can hear during the activity. Can it be carried out outside? Can the person hear birdsong, lawnmowers, the natural sounds of nature? Is there a preferred piece of music that will encourage relaxation or reminiscence? Can you hum a favourite tune whilst doing the activity?

Smell: Consider what the person can smell during the activity. Is smell inherent in the activity chosen, e.g. baking or planting herbs, or do you need to consider how to additionally stimulate this sense? You might use hand lotion, aftershave/cologne or a scented candle.

Touch: Consider how much touch is involved in the activity. Is the person touching different textures, textiles, e.g. soil, flour? Are they touching soft, hard or familiar textures? How much human touch is involved in the activity, e.g. holding hands, hugging?

Taste: Consider what the person is tasting during the activity. Is taste inherent in the activity – e.g. baking, or do you need to consider stimulating it separately? Consider what refreshments you might have to stimulate favourite or familiar tastes.