

Moments That Matter

Innovative Dementia Activities That Work

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Session Objectives

- Understand what makes an activity therapeutic rather than just busy work
- Learn how to design dementia friendly programs that truly engage
- Practice adapting activities for different stages of dementia
- Leave with tools you can immediately use in your activity program

Exercise 1: A Moment That Mattered

Think of a recent moment when you felt joyful and fully present. A moment where you were not checking your phone and were completely in the here and now.

Reflection Questions:

- How did you feel in your body
- Did you feel calm excited peaceful or energized
- Did time feel like it slowed down or sped up
- What did you smell taste hear or feel
- Where were you and who were you with
- What made this moment stick

Why this matters in dementia care:

People may forget the activity but the brain remembers how it felt. This is why sensory based meaningful moments matter more than perfection.

Exercise 2 Chasing the Feel Good

Dementia does not eliminate the brain's ability to experience pleasure and joy. At your table use the book to find one activity that sparks each feel good chemical.

- Dopamine = achievement, novelty, purpose
- Serotonin = belonging, pride, routine
- Endorphins = laughter, movement, comfort
- Norepinephrine = excitement, anticipation, engagement

Discussion prompt:

Why do you think this activity supports that feeling

Exercise 3 One Activity Three Stages

Choose one favorite activity you already do. Work together to adapt it for early moderate and later stage dementia.

Ask yourselves:

- What stays the same
- What support changes
- How does participation look different
- What feeling are we aiming for

Activity Examples by Stage

Early dementia:

Outings, cooking, chair yoga, reminiscence groups

Focus on independence choice and purpose

Moderate dementia:

Guided movement, supported outings, hands on cooking

Focus on rhythm modeling and reassurance

Later stage dementia:

Self care, taste testing, sensory experiences, gentle movement

Focus on comfort dignity and connection

Before You Plan Your Dementia Calendar

Pause and ask yourself:

- How do I want them to feel
- What senses can I engage
- What will help them feel safe and successful
- Would this be a moment worth waking up for

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