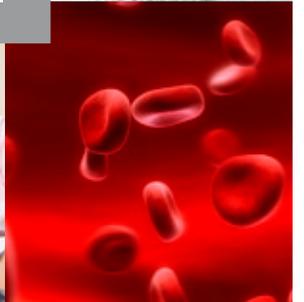
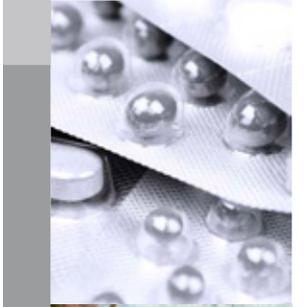




# *Reminiscence therapy*



**Intervene** & find out more

## Background

Reminiscence refers to recollections of memories from the past. It is familiar to us all and can be utilised for the benefit of others. For people with Alzheimer's disease encouraging the act of reminiscence can be highly beneficial to their inner self and their interpersonal skills. Reminiscence involves exchanging memories with the old and young, friends and relatives, with caregivers and professionals, passing on information, wisdom and skills. It is about giving the person with Alzheimer's a sense of value, importance, belonging, power and peace.

Reminiscence activity and therapies are used frequently in our own lives and well as in therapeutic settings and residential care. We all use it to cope in times of stress, such as mourning, it can also help reduce injury to our self image and it can create a feeling of intimacy and give special meaning to contact time with others.

### Different Mediums used for Reminiscence Therapy and Activities

A variety of mediums can assist the act of remembering that use different senses. It means that people who have difficulty communicating verbally can have the opportunity to do so in other ways. Establishing identity with or without words is a good example of how we have to adapt, giving a valuable opportunity to acquire and use new skills of communication.

- + **Visually:** photographs, slides. Painting pictures, looking at objects of autobiographical meaning.
- + **Music:** using familiar tunes from the radio, C.Ds, or making music using various instruments.
- + **Smell or taste:** using smell kits, different foods
- + **Tactile:** touching objects, feeling textures, painting and pottery.

### Types of Reminiscence Activities and Therapies

Reminiscence can be used as individual, group or family sessions and is generally categorised in three main types:

- + **Simple reminiscence.** Here the idea is to reflect on the past in an informative and enjoyable way.
- + **Evaluative reminiscence** is more of a therapy and may, for example, be used as a life reviewing or sometimes conflict resolving approach.
- + **Occasionally, unpleasant and stressful** information is recalled and this has been called offensive-defensive reminiscence. It can be the either the cause or the result of behavioral and emotional issues. Dealing with them can provide resolution - a coming to terms with life events and possible closure.

### Inclusion of Caregivers, Friends and Relatives in Reminiscence Activity

In a care facility, or in a professional setting, the co-operation and inclusion of relatives and friends can enhance the reminiscence time for all parties. They may be able to provide photos or remember incidents in the person's life that can increase the pleasure and engage a person with Alzheimer's attention more fully. Friends and relatives can also provide valuable information on any subject that a person may find distressing or upsetting that require increased support.

### The Right to Refuse Activity Involvement and Alzheimer's

Remember to respect the individual's involvement and contributions. By all means try to encourage participation but if a person does not want to be involved in the activity respect their right to refuse. Their refusal is as valid as yours, for self protection, privacy, as an act of autonomy and power over their situation.

## Get you started

Reminiscence is a way of reviewing past events that is usually a very positive and rewarding activity. Even if the person with dementia cannot participate verbally it can still give them pleasure to be involved in reflections on their past. It can also be a means of distraction if the person becomes upset.

While reviewing past events can provide a sense of peace and happiness, it can also stir up painful and sad memories. It is important to be sensitive to the person's reactions if this happens. If their distress seems overwhelming then it is better to use another form of distraction to reduce anxiety.

### This Is Your Life book

Making a chronological history of the person with dementia can help with reminiscence and provides information for people who may interact with them. A This Is Your Life book is a visual diary. Similar to a family photo album, it can also include letters, postcards, certificates and other memorabilia.

A large photo album with plastic protective sheets over each page will last indefinitely and can withstand a lot of use.

Each photo needs to be labeled to avoid putting the person with dementia on the spot with questions such as "Who is that?" It is best to limit the information on each page to one topic, and to have a maximum of two or three items on each page.

**The following list may help in getting a book started:**

- + Full name and preferred name
- + Place and date of birth
- + Photographs and name of mother, father, brothers and sisters
- + Photographs of partner and wedding day
- + Photographs, names and birthdays of children and grandchildren
- + Photographs of family friends, relatives and pets
- + Places lived in
- + Schooldays
- + Occupation and war service
- + Hobbies and interests
- + Favourite music
- + Holiday snapshots and postcards
- + Letter, certificate, diagram of family tree and short stories about specific incidents

This book can provide a great deal of pleasure and pride for a person who may be feeling increasingly bewildered in the present.