



Reminiscence Therapy

LID & DSIDC Workshop
September – November 2011

Reminiscence benefits– one to one



- Increases:
 - the ability to communicate and practice self expression.
 - social interaction through the sharing of experiences.
 - feelings of belonging and togetherness.
 - the individual identity and unique experiences of each person.
- Allows older people take on teaching role by sharing their experiences.
- Helps people to come to terms with growing older.
- Encourages older people to regain interest in past times and hobbies
- Encourages creativity.

Benefits continued

- Increases self worth and provides a sense of achievement.
- Reduces apathy and confusion, especially in confused people.
- Alleviates depression.
- Increases life satisfaction.
- Improves self-care.
- Helps older people deal with crisis, losses and life transitions.
- Meets psychological and emotional needs.
- Involvement in a meaningful and pleasurable activity and positive Interaction.



Benefits for the family and carer

- Gain knowledge and understanding about the a person's life, history and achievements
- Find links between the person's past experience and present behaviour
- Assist the relationship between, as understanding more about a person can facilitate more meaningful contact
- Provide an opportunity to learn about the past
- A way of finding a connection with another person and sharing similar experiences and memories



Doing reminiscence work

- Use sensitivity, flexibility, awareness and warmth
- Focus on positive interaction, emphasise brief, high quality interactions.
- Focus on the remaining abilities of the person taking into account the person's past and present strengths, interests and difficulties

Doing reminiscence work

- It does not matter if the enjoyment is for a short time or fleeting as it is still of value to that person
- Be aware of attempts to communicate. What we see as 'difficult behaviour' could simply be an attempt to communicate
- Be person focused and let the person talk about what is important to them.
- Spending time listening to a person says to them they are special and what they have to say is valuable.

Doing reminiscence work

- Use humour as a means of communication. It can catch a person's attention and has the capacity to hold it.
- Reminiscing with humour not only provides opportunities to enjoy it, but also gives permission to express it.



Doing reminiscence work

- It is important to recognise the many factors that influence one's life:
 - Growing up in a different country, living in rural or urban areas all offer different experiences. Other influences on a person's life can be growing up as part of a large family, different cultures, customs and language (Museum Victoria, 1995, p 3).



The five senses



- Some older people may no longer have the ability to explain or express their thoughts through words. Reminiscing is much more than simply talking about a memory. Reminiscing can involve all the senses.
- For people with difficulties in communicating verbally, the opportunities offered by a different, non verbal, way of communicating may be of great importance

The five senses



Providing sensory stimulation through:

- sound
- movement
- dance
- rhythm
- beat
- smell
- changes in light and colour
- objects
- tactile surfaces
- materials
- vibration
- food and experiencing flavour

can provide vivid and strong reminiscence.

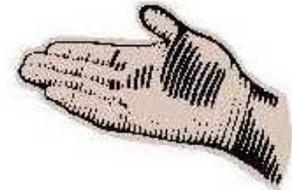
The five senses



- The person's ability to derive pleasure from the use of some or all of the five senses is an important strength.
- Many activities can involve some sort of sensory stimulation which result in a pleasurable activity
- Activities through visual and tactile modes can be stimulating and enjoyable

Hearing and Touch

- Hearing is a major sense that can bring pleasure.
- Touch is one of the only non verbal types of communication that can be fully perceived.
- Touch helps to keep in touch with the environment and reality.
- An agitated person will often relax when someone sits and holds their hand and talks to them.
- Touch conveys attitudes and feelings. Touch is something which cannot be faked.



When reminiscing brings up difficult, sad or distressing emotions



Not all memories are positive so it is important to 'check in' with the person throughout the reminiscing experience. Keep the following in mind:

- If an older person starts remembering a sad or difficult time in their life it is not necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes it is OK for the person explore their feelings and for these feelings to be acknowledged.
- Often sad experiences will be recalled as part of reminiscence therapy.
- These experiences are just as important as happy ones, so don't feel that you need to steer discussion on to a happier topic unless it is clear that the person is becoming stressed. Sometimes reminiscence can lead to feelings of depression and may require one to one follow up (St George Museum, 2004, pp 6-7).
- Environments should be supportive and confrontations should be avoided.

Engaging the person

- Be physically at the same level
- Make eye contact if possible.
- If eye contact is not possible be sure to have your hand or the reminiscing objects in a place the person will be able to see as this will help to make a connection.
- If the person has a sight impairment let them know you are with them through touch, movement, talking or possibly move them to an area where there will be a difference in light.



Engaging the person

- Always use a space where the person can feel comfortable, where there are minimal distractions and where you will not be interrupted.
- Give the person a clear introduction to the reminiscing session and theme.
- Don't rush the person. Allow time for them to communicate in a way that they are comfortable with.

Engaging the person

- Look for non verbal cues as they are often more subtle than verbal clues but probably more powerful.
- Look for the following:
 - Watch for facial expressions.
 - Is the person looking?
 - Is the person adding a gesture?
- Hand the person one object at a time.
- Keep to the pace of the older person. Some people will be interested in objects for a long time whilst others for only a short time.
- (Armstrong and Wright, 2002, p18)

Engaging the person

- When closing the reminiscence make sure the activity has a formal ending and that the person knows the reminiscing is coming to an end (Armstrong and Wright, 2002, p18).
- Check that the older person is not left thinking about a sad or distressing memory. If someone is thinking about a sad or distressing memory keep the following in mind:
 - 'Walk' the person out of that memory onto another.
 - Acknowledge how the person is feeling, that their emotions are genuine.
 - Stay with the person a little longer if time permits.

(Armstrong and Wright, 2002, p18)



Tips for successful conversation

- Don't ask specific questions that are closed ask open ended questions as they often work better e.g.
 - 'How are you getting on?'
 - 'Please give me some advice on...''
(not suitable for people with advanced dementia).



- Allow the person with dementia to set the agenda. Let the topic of conversation flow under the older person's control wherever possible.
- Be a good listener. Stop, wait and allow the older person time to speak. What may seem like an uncomfortable, silent wait for us can allow the older person time to gather their thoughts and respond.
(Surr, 2002, p25)

The importance of objects

- Providing a focus for reminiscing can be best achieved through objects.



- The objects are usually collected within a theme and can be used as a structured activity to support reminiscing. Objects can also be left with an older person for them to sort through and engage with.
- One researcher notes multi sensory triggers help compensate for different cognitive impairments and objects which can be touched, handled and passed around seem to be particularly important (Coaten, 2001, p20).

Reminiscing Kits

- Reminiscing kits are a great resource. When creating kits keep the following in mind:
- Older people should be familiar with most or all of the items in the kits.
- The objects need to be carefully selected so that they relate to specific ideas, events, occasions or periods of life.
- The objects need to be age and experience appropriate and safe for older people to use.
- Don't forget about kit maintenance by replacing all objects in the kits after use, cleaning some items if necessary.



Creating a Kit

- Talk with the older person about what is important to them and their experiences.
- Centre your kit around a theme
- Select an era or year appropriate for the older person
- Remember the senses
- Many items can be donated or found in second hand stores. Creating a kit does not have to be expensive.
- Make the container part of the theme and think about how it will be used.
- Will the kit sit in an older persons lap or simply be used for storage of items?
- (Museum Victoria, 1995, p13)



Other types of activities/ reminiscing materials

- Sensory stimulation, multi sensory environments.
- Soft toys, life-like dolls and toys.
- Sensory boxes.
- Cooking/ Art.
- Tactile boards / mats/ wall sculpture



(Wareing, 2000, pp22-24)

Other opportunities to reminisce

- There are many ways to reminisce. Using objects is a powerful way of touching the senses and stimulating memories however using themes in conversation during everyday activities can also provide positive engagement with an older person.
- One researcher notes it is about engaging older people throughout the day with positive interaction during routine care (Spencer and Joyce, 2000, p 20).
- Every day activities to use reminiscence
 - Meal times.
 - Bed times.
 - Bath/shower times.
 - Morning/ afternoon tea and supper time.
 - When assisting someone to walk to another area.
 - When giving medication.

Themes

- Below are a number of themes you could use in conversation during daily tasks. These types of questions can be useful to build up a personal 'life history' of the older person or as a way of allowing the person to express themselves.
- I was born
- My mother
- My father
- My brothers and sisters
- Other relatives
- First memories
- My childhood home
- Favourite rooms, things
- Childhood illness
- Childhood fears
- Childhood songs, street games
- Family life
- Sundays
- In the backyard
- Our neighbours
- Our childhood games
- Childhood pets
- Our town
- Childhood disasters

THEMES CONTINUED

- Toys and treats
- Christmas day
- Favourite food
- Heroes
- Radio, music
- Turning 21
- Cars
- The great depression
- During the war
- Children, other commitments
- Love, marriage
- Work
- Special friends
- Hurdles, heartbreaks
- Regrets
- (Thompson, year unknown)
- (Coaten, 2001, p 19)