



adasa

Association for Dementia and Alzheimer's of South Africa

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Dementia and Stimulating Activities

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The diagnosis of dementia can affect all aspects of a person's life. Persons with dementia gradually lose their cognitive abilities, but not everything is lost, focus on the things they can still do and enjoy, that will help them to stay positive and enhance their total wellbeing. Each person has interests, preferences, and routines, as well as different physical needs and abilities so they need to be treated as an individual. When participating in activities can increase self-esteem, maintain functionality, enhance quality of life, and promote total well-being. Having dementia does not mean that the person is unwell but staying physically and mentally healthy is the key to living well with dementia. The purpose of creating meaningful activities is not about filling the day, but keeping the person calmer, preventing depression, lessening anxiety and irritability, being happier, and connecting better with family, friends, and caregivers.

Planning of meaningful activities:

- Age, skills, and ability appropriate, linked to interests and previous hobbies (knitting, cooking, gardening, painting).
- Know the person's cultural background, likes and dislikes.
- Keeping in mind the stage of dementia, and being realistic.
- Spread one activity throughout the day, limited to 15 minutes.
- Do activities that require concentration in the mornings.
- Activities should be age-appropriate.
- The goal is to reduce stress and, bring joy to the person's life & create an opportunity for connection.
- Do not overstimulate the person.

Sensory Stimulation:

Focus on the 5 senses, sight (bright colour flowers), hearing (earphones for music), smell (pleasant scents/perfume/rain), taste (favourite foods), and touch (domestic animals/hugs) can trigger positive memories, bring joy, comfort, and reduce agitation.

Mental Activities:

Simple games like matching cards or recalling past events can help exercise memory and cognitive abilities. Reading, listening to the radio, board games, card games, crosswords, scrabble, sudoku, and other puzzles. Keeping involved in activities around the house as much as possible can also be a way to keep the mind stimulated.

Creative Activities:

Music, singing, dancing, drama, painting, colouring, crafting, and gardening can stimulate self-expression and improve fine motor skills, reduce anxiety, and encourage emotional expression.

Physical activities:

Gentle exercises such as walking, stretching, and dancing can enhance physical well-being, balance, and coordination while lifting spirits. Encourage the activities of daily living.

Reminiscence:

Sharing life experiences, memories, and stories from the past, (photo album or memory box) listening to old familiar songs, talking about school days, working life, special interests, etc. It can boost self-esteem and strengthen social connections.

Culture and Religion:

It is important to keep enjoying the activities that give meaning to their life or provide a sense of pleasure or peace.

