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Activity Ideas for People Living with Dementia

Memory and Reminiscing:

- Look at old photo albums and share stories about the pictures.
- Create a memory box with meaningful items.
- Play "Remember When" games, asking questions about past events long ago
- Find a photo of someone specific
- Listen to familiar music from their youth and sing along.
- Read aloud from a favorite book or magazine.
- Discuss childhood holidays and traditions (conversation cards available online or with the game Reminiscing)
- Make a family tree using photos and names
- Watch a slideshow of photos or family videos on the TV
- Check out the House of Memories app through the MN Historical Society together
- Subscribe to or find old nostalgia magazines like Reminscine, Good Old Days, or Remind Magazines
- Look at a picture book of dogs and reminisce about dogs you have had
- Play categories- select a word then think of different categories for the letters of the word ex. HOUSE H-all girls names that start with H O- all girls names that start with O, etc.
- Find a musicians concert on YouTube
- Read a book of known nursery rhymes
- Enjoy large coffee table/picture books (thrift store) or online "picture books for seniors"
- Sort marbles or jax or play a game
- Find a sing along for seniors on YouTube



Spiritual Activities

- Pray together
- Find a spiritual sing along for seniors on YouTube
- Lead prayer at mealtime
- Listen to your book of faith on YouTube
- Watch a religious themed show
- Do a meditation, follow along on YouTube
- Practice Tai Chi on YouTube
- Do a simple deep breathing exercise- in for 4 hold for 2 out for 4
- Listen to music from your faith
- Sit outside and listen to nature
- Name one thing you hear, one thing you see, one thing you feel, one thing you smell and one thing you taste in that moment
- Do easy religion trivia
- Read a children's version of the Bible with pictures

Sensory Activities:

- Smell fragrant herbs or flowers.
- Rock on a swing or in a rocking chair
- Hold a realistic baby doll (online- weighted is best)
- Brush the person's hair
- Touch different textures like soft fabrics, smooth stones, or textured clay.
- Put a puzzle together (age appropriate) with very large pieces or a floor puzzles- usually can find used at thrift stores (
- Make hot chocolate or cold lemonade
- Play with scented playdough.
- Play catch with a bean bag
- Feel different objects in a sock and guess what they are.
- Look at nature scenes in a coffee table book
- Measure out bags of rice



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Sensory Activities Continued...

- Enjoy a relaxing massage.
- Smell and eat an orange or other citrus fruit
- Use scented lotion for a hand massage
- Use sensory brushes on body (online) or give a back scratch
- Play a game with dice (small, medium, large foam, etc online)
- Play finish that tune- start up a favorite song to sing together and stop and see if they can keep singing the words
- Use a fidget blanket or busy board
- Enjoy a mechanical cat or dog (Joyful companions available Ebay use or new on Amazon)
- Pop all the circles in a pop-it
- Re-pot some household plants
- Watch 4K Travel and Nature programs on YouTube for free
- Go to a candy store or flavored popcorn store
- Bake fresh bread or go to a bakery for the smells and tastes

Creative Activities:

- Color in coloring books
- Paint in a "just add water" book
- Use Aquapaints just add water pictures over and over again- online
- Paint with acrylics or watercolors
- Make simple crafts like paper plate decorations.
- Do simple clay modeling
- Create collages from magazine clippings
- Make greeting cards with stamps and markers
- Write short stories or poems
- Paint wooden objects from the dollar store or Home Depot may have some free ones (check your local store if they donate these for kids crafts)
- Cut up pictures from old calendars



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Creative Activities continued...

- Make up a song about someone or something
- Sort googly eyes by size (dollar store)
- Sort fuzzy pom poms by color (dollar store)
- Sharpen all the colored pencils
- Sand down bark off of branches
- Sand blocks of wood
- Write up a script for a play and perform it
- Sort buttons by color or size
- String popcorn and hang up for the birds

Physical Activities:

- Go for a short walk outdoors
- Go outside to look for birds or feed the birds
- Play an indoor bowling game with plastic or foam pins
- Play table hockey with kleenex boxes and a jar lid
- Play pickle ball (standing or seated)
- Throw giant inflatable dice for a game (over head throw with both arms)
- Do gentle stretching exercises
- Play magnetic darts
- Dance to familiar music
- Put on marching tunes and march
- Play simple ball games like catch
- Garden and plant flowers
- Water houseplants
- Use cans of soup for hand weights
- Exercise with a therapy band
- Play with a ring toss or cornhole
- Keep a balloon up in the air (balloon volleyball)
- Chair aerobics on YouTube
- Walk to the mailbox or post office for exercise



Household Tasks:

- Fold laundry- towels, baby clothes (thrift store)
- Sort and polish silverware with a cloth
- Wipe down surfaces
- Sort scraps of cloth (find online)
- Match socks- baby socks work well too
- Dust furniture
- Set the table
- Cut all the pictures out of the day's newspapers "for an upcoming project"
- Sweep the floor
- Vacuum (if needed there are lightweight cordless vacuums online)
- Put office papers in order by date
- Put office papers in order alphabetically
- Cut papers into small pieces for taking notes by the phone
- Sharpen all the pencils, make sure all the pens are working
- Decorate for the season or holiday
- Create fake flower arrangements in vases (dollar store- cut up in individual stems) can start this over each day
- Try to fix something that is broken like a clock, radio, etc.
- Sort cards by suit, by number, by red and black or mix two decks together with different colors on the back and sort
- Bake cookies or cakes together
- Try some no-bake treat recipes together
- Decorate sugar cookies with frosting (in tubes at grocery store)
- Copy something on paper word for word
- Do simple math exercises
- Sort nuts and bolts
- Sort coins
- Play junk drawer detective (ask them to find certain things in a junk drawer or box of misc. stuff)
- Do the dishes or just rinse them all



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Household Activities Continued...

- Scrub the sink
- Peel potatoes or carrots
- Trim green beans
- Peel oranges for breakfast
- Clean under the couch and chair cushions or inside the car with a hand vacuum
- Wash the car together outside

Social Activities

- Play simple card games like King's Corner, Go Fish or Crazy 8s
- Listen to audiobooks together
- Go to your favorite restaurant
- Watch familiar movies or TV shows
- Attend a local senior center event
- Have a pet visit
- Invite friends and family over for a simple meal
- Go to a car show
- Go to a local museum
- Go to a gardening class
- Go to your place of worship
- Plan a short trip to a zoo or aquarium (bring a wheelchair if they get tired)
- Find a dementia friendly worship (shorter worship service and familiar songs)
- Join the Kairos Alive Clubhouse online to dance and listen to music
- Find a Memory Cafe
- Find a respite program at the senior center



Important Considerations:

- **Adapt activities to the person's abilities:** Simplify tasks and provide assistance as needed. Example: if sorting a lot buttons in different colors is too difficult, reduce the number of color choices to 2 or 3 different colors to sort
- **Keep routines consistent:** Maintain a regular schedule to provide structure. Try doing 3 activities a day-after breakfast, after lunch and late afternoon- more if needed
- **Write up easy instructions:** Write up what they are doing to refer to if they forget "Sort buttons by color"
- **Invent reason for doing the activity:** "we are sorting these for the local school- they are doing a project." "I could use some help with copying this word for word." "
- **Try doing it together at first, then on their own if appropriate**
- **Use positive reinforcement:** Offer praise and encouragement throughout activities but keep your tone of voice adult- don't do baby talk to someone living with dementia

Created by Amy House, Certified Dementia Practitioner Edited 12/2024