

Ideas of activities to do in the home and garden

This list offers simple leisure activities to do with service users around the house, which involve minimal setting up and do not cost much. Most of them have a sensory slant, which should help to keep the service user's interest. Hopefully they will inspire you to think up other ideas, which you can then add on the back.

Art

Use everyday objects to work on creative art projects such as:-

- Fruit and vegetable printing, leaf printing
- Scented pictures using fresh, dried or pressed flowers or herbs
- Use items for recycling to make a tactile wall, e.g. liquid bottles, egg boxes, screwed up paper etc
- Make hanging mobiles from everyday objects eg milk bottle tops, buttons, foil, sticks
- Make collages from everyday objects, eg food labels, magazine cuttings, materials. The collage could show the service user's favourite things
- Make up a tactile matching game for people to play together, eg like 'snap'

Bird Watching/Feeding

- Buy a basic bird table or bird feeder with the individual, which can be placed in an area within view of a window. Involve the service users in placing a range of different bird feeds or leftover foodstuff on/in it regularly. Increase interest by looking up the types of birds seen feeding, using books or the internet, or by selecting CDs of bird song from the library together etc
- Attach bird boxes, especially the type with glass backs, to a window. Encourage a routine of feeding, watching, photographing, taping and videoing, offer use of binoculars etc

Dancing

- Choose different pieces of music and look at different types of dance, eg old time, country or line dancing, Scottish dancing, ballet, disco etc
- Organise a party with a musical theme, e.g. 60s, 70s, 1920s
- Provide opportunities for the person to develop a sense of rhythm and movement. Use props, e.g. scarves, masks, clothes, hats to create different dances
- Use mirrors, especially full length mirrors, to reinforce movement of person
- wheelchair dancing
- Look at different videos or TV programmes to do with dance and focus on this with the person

Decorating

- Decorate objects or areas of a room using various techniques such as marbling, sponging, stencilling or painting
- Involve the person in choosing colours when decorating, and in choosing objects to be decorated etc
- Use a variety of painting equipment such as rollers, sandpaper, brushes, wallpaper paste, scraper etc, to provide a range of sensory experiences

Eating

- Create different themes to the day. For example carrots - think of many different ways to prepare them, e.g. carrot cake, salad, soufflé, soup, raw sticks etc. Do the same for potatoes, bread, cheese, etc
- Organise Indian, Greek, German days, which involve people in aspects of different continental cookery and eating. Match the atmosphere with music, clothes, objects, utensils etc to promote a different environment and eating experience

Music

- Encourage each person to have their own choice of music on CD/cassette with the option to play this on a portable device as well as at home
- Make your own musical instruments (e.g. simple percussion).
- Organise discos/dances in the house, e.g. for birthdays.
- Use music for relaxation or as background to other sessions, e.g. art/drama. It may also be used as an active part of the same sessions.

Photographs

- This can be informal, e.g. just taking snaps and building up a paper album or on a computer, or more formal
- Set aside regular times to choose which photos to put in the album. This could be done at the end of a day or week, as a record of what the person has done. If done on a computer, you could add music, special effects, create subtitles together etc
- Encourage the person to choose a theme they might like to photograph, e.g. animals, countryside, seascape, people
- Encourage reminiscence, e.g. looking back over past events
- Encourage responsibility of 'caring' for photos
- Develop your own photographs
- Frame enlargements and decide together where to hang them in rooms in the house or who to give them to as gifts
- Laminate enlargements
- Use online photo shop services such as having a mug, tee shirt, place mat etc made out of favourite photos
- Use photos as a communication aid, e.g. what do you want for lunch, options for things to do today
- Look at old photos, organise a social activity e.g. 'guess the baby in the photo'

Sorting

Use different household items that need to be sorted, e.g.:-

- Laundry - separating whites from coloureds, woollens from other materials. What do they feel like, what colour are they, whose are they? After the wash, sort which items need ironing and sort into piles for different people etc
- Putting shopping away - what's been bought, what is it for, where does it go? What are the textures, colours, smells, tastes, sounds of the items etc?
- Spring cleaning cupboards or drawers - what's to be kept, what is it used for? What should be thrown away, what needs cleaning etc?

Wrapping

- This can vary from wrapping food in cling film or foil, wrapping items in newspaper for storage, wrapping gifts and parcels etc
- Talk about the material used - does it work easily or does it stick together, does it make a sound? Involve the person in using sticky tape, string or glue etc, and see focus on how it feels to touch these items
- Choose from a range of papers when wrapping a present, use ribbons, bows etc
- Try wrapping up different shaped items around the house. Which are easy to wrap, which shapes are hard?

Yearly seasons

Spend time focusing on the changes associated with a new season coming...

- Find pictures in magazines or on the internet relating to seasonal changes – e.g. changing nature, sports events that occur, types of food eaten, leisure activities that take place etc
- Identify what festivals/holidays are in the forthcoming season. Will changes be needed for the person's clothing, bedding etc – involve them in these changes
- Focus on the past season – what were the highlights for that person, what will they miss, what will they be pleased to see the end of etc?

Ref:

Hendley, M, Wilson, W, Richards, A (1996). A-Z of Household Sensory Activities. Exeter & District Community Health Service NHS Trust (Can be purchased through www.specialneedstoys.com at £9.86)

This leaflet has been produced by Occupational Therapists in Devon and Cornwall, based on the above reference