

**How to maintain wellbeing and reduce distress in people living with dementia (during the COVID-19 pandemic)**

1. **‘Reminiscence’ –** Useful for those distressed/preoccupied by the here and now
2. **‘Simulated Presence Therapy’ –** Useful for those feeling disconnected from family and friends
3. **‘Virtual Entertainment’ –** Useful for those lacking stimulation and/or struggling with reduced contact with the outside world

**Intervention 1 – ‘Reminiscence’**

Adapted from the Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust/Occupational Therapy Quality Improvement Resources ‘Reminiscence’ poster (2013).

* If the person living with dementia is acutely distressed about the COVID-19 pandemic and preoccupied by events in the here-and-now, consider supporting them to reminisce about more positive life events.
* This may be done through generating a life story, looking at old photographs, looking at photographs of celebrities and familiar places, looking at ‘old’ objects and games, watching ‘old’ films and documentaries and/or listening to ‘old’ songs. NOTE – ‘old’ is generational specific, identify the period in time for which the person living with dementia has the ‘strongest’ and fondest memories.
* The benefits of ‘reminiscence’ work are said to include;
  + Improved social interaction
  + Improved self-esteem
  + Aids communication/gives a point of reference for dialogue
  + Provides diversion and distraction
  + Reduces agitation and aggression
  + Promotes concentration
  + Provides a way to affirm who the person living with dementia is and what they have accomplished in their life
  + Enables a discussion of older memories, which are more likely to be intact (“able memory”).
* However, take care, as the memories evoked may be unhappy. If you know the person living with dementia well, then you will know what topics to avoid (if your intention is to improve their current sense of wellbeing).
* You may find the reminiscence ‘prompt’ cards on the following page particularly helpful if you struggle to bring to mind potential topics to reminisce about, questions to ask and/or activities to do. We would advise you to print and cut these out, and place them in convenient locations around the person living with dementia’s home, for ease of access.

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| --- | --- |
| Fashion graphics  Reminiscence  **Work**  When did you leave school?  What chores did you do as a child?  What did you do as a job?  What hours/days did you work? | Fashion graphics  Reminiscence  **Work**  Can you remember work colleagues/friends?  How did you travel to work?  What did you spend your first pay packet on?  Did you enjoy your job? |
| Fashion graphics  Reminiscence  **Family**  What did you dad do for a living?  What did you mum do for a living?  Do you have any brothers or sisters?  Do you have any children, nieces or nephews? | Fashion graphics  Reminiscence  **Family**  Do you remember your grandparents?  What did you spend your pocket money on as a child?  When you were a teenager what did you do with your friends?  Games played as a child? |
| C:\Documents and Settings\atkinsong\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\OXA8UWQ7\MP900427836[1].jpgC:\Documents and Settings\atkinsong\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\R9TAF6P3\MC900384202[1].wmf  Reminiscence  **General Subjects**  Do you enjoy doing any hobbies? (Knitting, sewing, woodwork, sports?)  Do you remember going to your first dance?  Have you ever met a famous person?  Have you ever gone to see a musician play live? Who is your favourite musician? | Fashion graphics  Reminiscence  **General Subjects**  Does any smell bring back a particular memory?  Do you play any musical instrument or ever tried?  What is your favourite T.V programme?  Do you like to watch any sports? (tennis, football, rugby) |
| C:\Documents and Settings\atkinsong\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\GQEQT7R4\MC900445390[1].wmfC:\Documents and Settings\atkinsong\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\9QN0SW9S\MC900434969[1].wmf  Reminiscence  **General Subjects**  What is your favourite foods?  What foods or drinks do you dislike?  What kind of films did you enjoy going to watch at the cinema?  What is your favourite film? | C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0281904.wmfC:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0281904.wmfC:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0281904.wmfFashion graphics  Reminiscence  **General Subjects**  What is the best age to be?  Do you find that listening to music changes your mood?  What is the one thing that would brighten up your day?  What relaxes you? (bath, a manicure, sitting outside)?  What is your favourite plant? |
| musical staff with notesmusical staff with notesmusical staff with notesFashion graphics  Activities  Cleaning the windows  Going for a walk in the garden  Looking at a newspaper  Looking at a magazine or book of interest  Helping tidy/put things away  Doing a puzzle (crosswords etc in activity cupboard) | C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0199727.wmfC:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0199727.wmfC:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0199727.wmfFashion graphics  Activities  Doing an activity (active ties in cupboard)  Playing skittles  Playing catch  Playing cards/dominoes  Looking after the dolls (doll therapy)  Talking about the wall art  Music CD sing-along |

**Intervention 2 - Simulated Presence Therapy**

Adapted from ‘Simulated Presence Therapy – Guide for Care Homes’ (Susanna Thwaites, Occupational Therapist, Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust, 2010)

**Context**

Simulated Presence Therapy (SPT) was developed by Woods & Ashley (1995) as an intervention to reduce levels of anxiety, agitation and behaviours that challenge (formerly known known as ‘challenging behaviours’) in people living with dementia.

**What is it?**

It involves a close family member/familiar carer making an audiotape or videotape of their voice, usually reminiscing about memories that are significant and happy to the person living with dementia. This tape is then played using headphones through a smart phone, tablet device, personal stereo, CD /DVD. It should be played in a quiet room.

**Theoretical Background**

The theory is that SPT is effective as the voice of a close relative (‘adult attachment figure’) can reduce separation anxiety experienced by the person living with dementia by replicating a carer’s presence. An environment is created that may provide comfort through stimulation of preserved remote memories (‘old’ or ‘long-term’ memories) and the positive emotions associated with those memories.

This is particularly important when thinking about the impact of self-isolation – and associated enforced distancing from family members as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic – on someone living with dementia.

**Evidence Base**

As with many ‘non-pharmacological’ interventions, SPT has been evaluated by a limited range of studies and there is little agreement between the studies about the how effective it is or for whom it is most effective.

The most recent review of the evidence was a systematic review and meta-analysis (Zetteler, 2008). The review suggests that there is some evidence to support the use of SPT but that due to the small number of studies and some methodological weaknesses, the results need to be treated with caution. They conclude that the individuals most likely to benefit from SPT are:

* + Those living with moderate to severe dementia who are unable to remember the content of the audiotape (i.e. they will not remember they have heard the recording before).
  + Those who do not have a hearing impairment.
  + Those who have retained conversational skills.
  + Those who had previous secure attachment styles.
  + Those who have/had a significant and high quality relationship with the person who created the audiotape.

There were wide variations between the studies in how often SPT was used with individuals. Some studies used it routinely twice per day and some only after an episode of agitation was observed by staff.

* If in isolation, ask close family members to send recordings digitally via text or email.

**Intervention 3 – Virtual Entertainment**

Adapted with permission from Suzanne Crooks/Edinburgh Behaviour Support Service, NHS Lothian (2020)

**Rationale**

The prospect of being isolated can be a daunting idea, and can lead to feelings of stress, anxiety and boredom for a lot of people living with dementia and carers. Consider the following options for virtual entertainment, which give the person living with dementia the option of getting involved in the outside world without having to leave the comfort of their home!

**Technology Requirements**

All of the following links can be streamed through a smartphone, computer tablet device, or laptop/desktop, and in some cases can be connected to a TV through HDMI or through chrome cast. Smart TVs have access to certain entertainment apps and internet browser where events can be streamed directly from the TV.

*Virtual ‘Tours’*

* A number of museums, zoos and famous landmarks all over the world are offering free virtual tours presently.
* For some you just need to press ‘play’, whilst others a degree of interaction, e.g. navigating your way around the museum online and clicking on different artefacts or exhibitions to get an audio description.
* This is a nice option for people living with dementia who have an interest in history, art, museums or travelling.
* There are lots of options for virtual tours, from art museums to natural history museums, and such an activity may provide topics of reminiscence for someone living with dementia.
* Here are some examples of virtual tours available;
  + Buckingham Palace: <https://www.royal.uk/virtual-tours-buckingham-palace>
  + The British Museum: <https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com/>
  + Link to various world museums: <https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>
  + Link to some of London’s top museums: <https://mumsdotravel.com/2020/03/how-to-explore-londons-top-museums-from-home/>
  + Link to some of London’s top galleries: <https://mumsdotravel.com/2020/03/how-to-explore-londons-top-art-galleries-from-home/>
  + Link to ‘500’ museums and art galleries: <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en>
  + More than 30 virtual field trips: <https://theeducatorsspinonit.com/virtual-field-trips-for-kids/>
  + Italy’s Cinque Terra Coast: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xf5QTs2NLRc>
  + The Great Wall of China: <https://www.thechinaguide.com/destination/great-wall-of-china>
  + Live webcams from Edinburgh Zoo (UK) (including penguins): <https://www.edinburghzoo.org.uk/webcams/rockhopper-penguin-cam/#rockhopperpenguincam>
  + Chester Zoo (UK) virtual tours (via Facebook): <https://www.facebook.com/chesterzoo1/>
  + Live webcams from Houston Zoo, USA: <https://www.houstonzoo.org/explore/webcams/>
  + Live webcams from Georgia Aquarium, USA (including beluga whale): <https://www.georgiaaquarium.org/webcam/beluga-whale-webcam/>
  + Live webcams from Monterey Bay Aquarium, USA: <https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams>

*‘Music’*

* Listening to music can relieve stress, anxiety and agitation and depression for many of us, and people living with dementia can also benefit.
* Musical memories are often preserved with people living with dementia, as key brain areas linked to musical memory remain relatively undamaged by the disease.
* Think about the person living with dementia’s musical preferences when choosing which music to play and monitor how they respond.
* A number of different musical groups and concerts are now doing online concerts and performances, which are available to ‘stream’ live (at specific times, though check time difference) or played online (pre-recorded).
* Information on individual artists and acts can be found online by a quick Internet or ‘Youtube’ ([https://www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/?gl=GB&hl=en-GB)) search.
* Here are some suggestions for musical, classical music and opera events;
  + Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (not live): <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheMSOrchestra/videos>
  + Metropolitan Opera (live streams at specific times and recordings): <https://www.metopera.org/>
  + Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra (live streams at specific times and recordings): <https://www.digitalconcerthall.com/en/home>
  + Andrew Lloyd Webber musicals: <https://www.youtube.com/theshowsmustgoon>
* ‘Playlist for life’ is an online resource for developing personalised playlists. They specialise in working with people living with dementia. ‘Playlist for life’ can be accessed via the following link:
  + <https://www.playlistforlife.org.uk/>

*‘Films & Television Shows’ (beyond the standard television channels)*

Netflix

* This is a subscription video streaming service.
* You pay a monthly fee (roughly £8.99) and receive access to all series and movies on the platform.
* You can access Netflix on your smartphone, computer tablet, laptop, or some TVs have the option to install Netflix or have a Netflix channel.
* Netflix requires an internet connection but series and movies can be easily downloaded for offline access.
* This is a great app for movies, TV shows, documentaries and comedy acts.
* Netflix will also recommend television shows based on others than you enjoy watching.
  + <https://www.netflix.com/gb/>

Amazon Prime Video

* This is another subscription video streaming service.
* Membership costs around £5.99 a month and can be accessed online.
* Some smart TVs have applications which allow you to access prime video without using a laptop.
* Similarly to Netflix, TV shows, documentaries and movies can be watched on this.
  + <https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/offers/ref=dvm_uk_sl_ambr%7Cc_80333106163189_m_PR7jUR5E-dc_s_/261-6034589-2314540>

Black & White Films

* Some classic black and white and old films can be streamed online for free at the following site:
  + <http://www.blackandwhitemovies.org/>.
* This may be especially good for older people living with dementia as it might remind them of their childhood (potentially facilitating additional reminiscence-based conversations).

**\*\*\* A more comprehensive list of online resources can be found at: \*\*\***

[**https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/list-of-online-resources-for-anyone-who-is-isolated-at-home**](https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/list-of-online-resources-for-anyone-who-is-isolated-at-home)