Autumn Activity Guide
Bringing joy to people living with dementia
Choosing the Right Activity

Each activity idea in this guide has been categorised to identify the type of activity and who the activity is best for to support you in finding the right activity, for the right person/group and planning activity rotas.

Activity Levels by Jackie Pool:

1. **Level 1 - Reflex**
   Able to engage with another person or an object when direct sensory stimulation is provided to raise the person’s self-awareness.

2. **Level 2 - Sensory**
   Able to engage with activities that prompt a response because of multi-sensory stimulation.

3. **Level 3 - Exploratory**
   Able to carry out activities following simple instructions, that are very familiar in well-known surroundings.

4. **Level 4 - Planned**
   Able to carry out activities and work towards completing that activity, with support needed only if a problem arises.

Type of Activities:

- **Arts & Crafts**
- **Reminiscence**
- **Movement**
- **In the Garden**
- **Games**
- **Puzzles & Quizzes**
- **Sensory**
- **Music**
- **Discussion**
- **Event**
- **Trips Out**
- **Daily Tasks**
- **Media**
- **I’ve 10 mins**
- **Read & Write**
- **I’ve 20 mins**
- **Food**
- **I’ve 60+ mins**
- **I’ve 60+ mins**

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**Daily Tasks**
Lavender Bags

Not only is lavender a beautiful and vibrant coloured flower, but the fragrance is powerful and memorable, which can help with reminiscence, making it a fantastic activity tool. There is also a strong link between lavender and sleep, with the scent not only helping to create a relaxing environment but proven to be beneficial in aiding sleep. This is particularly helpful during the autumn season, as the night’s draw in and the clocks go back, which can cause people with dementia to struggle with their sleep patterns. Once this activity has been completed, encourage people to place the lavender bag near or underneath their pillow when they go to bed, this may help them to fall asleep easier.

Instructions

Take 2 cotton squares, patterned side out, and sew together 3 and a half sides (leaving a gap for the lavender to be inserted). Stitching should ideally be 1cm in each side to give a pillow-like effect, and be close together so the lavender doesn’t fall out.

Using a teaspoon, fill the sachet with the lavender, ensuring it’s not too full. Sew the opening up securely.

TOP TIP – As well as aiding sleep, the lavender bags can be given as gifts to friends and family as drawer/wardrobe fresheners.

What You’ll Need

- Patterned cotton squares (15cm x 15cm)
- Needle and cotton
- Dried lavender

At Home Scentscape
Time For Tea

There is nothing quite so British as tea, so why not spend a morning or afternoon celebrating this wonderful tradition and encouraging people to try new flavours they may not have experienced before? A tea morning/afternoon also encourages socialising, as well as being a fun way to keep people hydrated.

Instructions

Before the tasting begins, invite the person, or group, to smell the tea leaves before the tea is made. Ask them to try to guess what flavour that tea may be.

Make a cup for each participant, but try to avoid a full cup as there are many flavours to be tried.

Encourage people to smell the tea first, before taking a sip – ask if they think it tastes like it smells.

To help with conversation, encourage the person to share any memories that the smell or taste of the tea reminds them of, perhaps a holiday they went on or a birthday party they attended?

In between each tea tasting, ask people to take a sip of water or a bite of a sandwich to refresh their mouths, ready for the next flavour. Repeat the same process again, smelling the leaves, before making and tasting the tea and sharing a memory.

Once all the tea has been tasted, have a chat about which flavour tea was the favourite of the person or group.

TOP TIP – Encourage further participation in the tea tasting by asking people to help set up the activity; putting out teacups and saucers, making up the sandwiches etc.

What You’ll Need

- A variety of flavours of tea (loose tea is generally the best option, but teabags are also ok).
- Some tea suggestions are:
  - Peppermint
  - Mango & Strawberry
  - Camomile
  - Green Tea
  - Lemon
  - Ginger
  - Echinacea
  - Jasmine
- Jug of water and glasses
- A few light snacks to accompany the tasting. Cucumber sandwiches are a great idea as not only do they traditionally accompany an afternoon tea, but they are not so flavoursome that they detract from the taste of the teas.
Instructions

Preheat the oven to 180°C or gas mark 4.

Cream together the butter and the both sugars until they are light and fluffy, then beat the egg and vanilla extract into the mixture. Next add the pumpkin and beat this into the mixture too.

Take another bowl and add the flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt and whisk these together. Gradually add the flour mixture into the creamed mixture and fold together. Lastly add in the oats and chocolate chips and stir.

Place a baking sheet on a tray and scoop a heaped tablespoonful of the mixture onto the sheet, repeat, ensuring the mixture is placed evenly apart, allowing space for the cookies to spread when baking. (There should be enough mix for around 30 cookies).

Bake for about 10-12 minutes, until the cookies are lightly browned. Remove to cool and then serve with a cup of tea or coffee.

TOP TIP – To aid someone to make the cookies more independently, have the weighed ingredients prepared and labelled.

What You’ll Need

- 90g of softened butter
- 90g of brown sugar
- 100g of sugar
- 1 small egg
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- 100g of canned pumpkin
- 120g of plain flour
- 45g of oats
- 85g of chocolate chips
- ½ tsp of baking powder
- ¼ tsp of salt
- ½ tsp cinnamon
Childhood Days Reminiscence

Reminiscence is a powerful activity to help engage a person with dementia who is struggling to recall recent memories. This can often cause them to have issues engaging in everyday conversation, which in turns leads them to retreat from socialising, becoming more isolated and lonely. However, engaging them in an activity that encourages them recall past memories, such as events from their childhood years, can help a person to feel engaged, allowing them to then share these memories with their family and friends.

Instructions

This activity can be enjoyed in a group or as an individual.

Create a relaxed and informal environment for the activity to take place, perhaps over a cup of tea (and a pumpkin chip cookie too), so the participants don’t feel ‘put on the spot’ when answering the questions – it should feel like a fun chat.

Each person takes it in turns to pick a card out of the box and read the question. Allow them time to share their answer with the group. After they have answered, open the question up to the rest of the group, as it may have also triggered memories for others that they wish to share.

Place the props in the centre of the group, allowing people to pick them up and interact with them, as these may also help trigger memories.

Depending on how long each question is discussed, you might only have time for a few cards. Sense the mood of the person/group, and stop as soon as people become tired, saving the questions for another time.

TOP TIP – Ensure that the questions written on the cards are big and easy to read out.

What You’ll Need

- A small brightly decorated box, around 15cm x 15cm and 10cm deep
- On 20 pieces of card, have a prepared a set of questions to help evoke memories (place these cards in the box)
- Card suggestions:
  - Who was your best friend at school?
  - What games did you play at break times?
  - Did you have a family car?
  - Where would you go to on days’ out?
  - Did you ever go on camping trip?
  - Do you have a favourite memory?
- Having a few props in the room to help trigger memories can be useful too, e.g:
  - A school satchel
  - Marbles
  - Skipping Rope
  - Scout or Brownie Badges
Autumn Poetry

The gorgeous colours of Autumn make this fantastic season the perfect inspiration for creative writing activities, such as poetry. Creating pieces of poetry is a great tool to engage and stimulate a person with dementia, allowing them to think creatively and maintain their writing and language skills.

Instructions

Lay all the autumnal items on a table and encourage the person/group to rummage through, helping them become inspired about the Autumn season. You may want to create a sensory environment by adding an autumnal scent to the room using Active Mind’s Forest Days spray and playing the Forest CD in the background.

As each person is looking through the autumn props, encourage them to think about the theme of their poem, perhaps picking one of the items to help get them started. Place that prop in front of them and give them a pencil and paper to start writing.

It is important that people know that their poem does not need to be long, nor does it need to rhyme, they can simply put their thoughts to paper and allow their creative juices to flow – there is no right or wrong when it comes to poetry. Once they have finished their poem, they can read their piece out, or they may choose to keep it as a personal poem instead.

TOP TIP – Don’t rush anyone, allow them to take as much time as they like to complete their poem. If needs be, they can take the poem away with them and finish it over time.

What You’ll Need

• Pencils
• Paper
• Gather some of the following autumnal items to help inspire poetry writing:
  - Autumn leaves
  - Pine Cones
  - Conkers
  - Acorns
  - Twigs
  - Toffee apples
  - Corn
  - Scarves & gloves
  - Forest Days Spray & CD (if available)
Autumn
Wordsearch

Wordsearches are a great activity to either be enjoyed in a group, helping each other find the words, or as an individual. If using the wordsearch as a part of a group activity, then print off the puzzle, or transfer by hand, onto a large piece of paper and attach to the wall so the entire group can see it.

As each word is found, spend some time reminiscing about memories involving the word. For example, once the word ‘conkers’ has been found, you can discuss playing conkers as a child and what techniques they used to make their conker strong.

Instructions

With eyes closed, allow each participant to either smell, feel or taste one of the items. Encourage them to discuss what they are smelling, feeling or tasting - do they like it or not? Is it familiar? Can they remember smelling/feeling/tasting something like this before? Ask them to guess what the item could be. If this activity is taking place in a group, perhaps put everyone into pairs, getting them to work together to find the answer.

Autumn

X R L V W I D N N R O C A O
C R W C O B J F E H I V J P
S A E B O R G F S E V A E L
Z I L E D H E D G E H O G E
R N L R P V T J C Y K J Z P
Y C I R E Q I B H M D V H U
L O E I C P U M P K I N A D
K A S E K F K Q V S X P R D
Q T Q S E H L H I B F E S L
D U V X R Y K Z J P K U J E
L E R R I U Q S X N V Y A S
M U S H R O O M O R B I M P
K G H D G Z K C S O U P Z F
E N J K V M H Z J G U W L A

Acorn
Berries
Conker
Hedgehog
Jam
Leaves
Mushroom

Pumpkin
Puddles
Raincoat
Soup
Squirrel
Wellies
Woodpecker
Guess That Picture

A popular and fun game for all ages and abilities to be enjoyed when the family is together, or as a group game in a residential home. Ensure anyone that may be put off by the fact that drawing is involved that participants do not have to be artistic, a lot of fun can be had guessing what the picture is meant to be.

Instructions

The first person picks a card from the bowl, being careful not to show the word to anyone else. They must try to draw the item named on the card onto the paper on the wall.

The rest of the group then try to guess what the drawing is of. Whoever guesses correctly, scores a point and takes the next turn.

The winner is the person at the end of the game (when all the words have been drawn) with the most points.

TOP TIP – If you notice that a person has really enjoyed this activity, then you may want to think about introducing other activities that involve drawing. For example, the Active Minds Doodle Quest, which requires very little preparation and can be enjoyed almost anywhere.

What You’ll Need

- A list of random words, each written on an individual piece of paper or card
- Some words to get you started are:
  - Alligator
  - Biscuit
  - Wellington Boots
  - Record Player
  - Fried Egg
  - Snowflake
  - Rainbow
  - Tea pot
  - Rubber Gloves
  - Love Letter
- A large bowl to place the cards in
- Large sheets of paper attached to the wall, to draw on
- Marker pens

Doodle Quest
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10th October</td>
<td>Cake Decorating Day</td>
<td>Whether it’s cupcakes or a celebration cake, why not get creative with your piping bag?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th October</td>
<td>World Conker Championships</td>
<td>The perfect day to help spark childhood memories – go out exploring and collect conkers, then organise a conker tournament.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 14th October</td>
<td>Chocolate Week</td>
<td>A whole week dedicated to chocolate? It must be celebrated! Organise a chocolate tasting session, experimenting with unusual flavours like chilli, ginger or raspberry.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25th October</td>
<td>International Artists Day</td>
<td>Organise a trip to your local art gallery or museum and spend the day enjoying the art on offer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27th October</td>
<td>The Clocks Go Back</td>
<td>To mark the changing of the clocks, dig out the knitting and crochet needles and start making those much needed cosy accessories, like scarves and blankets, to help keep you and your loved ones warm as winter approaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 28th October</td>
<td>Sausage Week</td>
<td>Why not experiment with a week of sausage based meals such as bangers &amp; mash, hot dogs, toad in the hole, sausage casserole or maybe even a spicy chorizo pasta bake.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th November</td>
<td>Remembrance Sunday/Armistice Day</td>
<td>In preparation for this day, how about making your own poppy wreath. A peaceful day to remember, so it may be nice to reflect and sit quietly reading some poetry about remembrance day. Or find some old time songs to play and have a sing a long session.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14th November</td>
<td>Guinness World Record Day</td>
<td>Who doesn’t have an old annual on their bookshelf. Grab this down and look through at some of the more extreme and unusual records. Or you could even set up some family challenges, get 2 plates, chopsticks and dried beans, time who can transfer the beans from one plate to the next in the quickest time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29th November</td>
<td>C.S Lewis Birthday</td>
<td>As the winter nears, what better time than to curl up with a favourite book to read, or listen to an audio version. The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe is one of C.S Lewis most famous stories. What's your favourite book to read?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>