

Reminiscence Activities: Reminiscence versus Nostalgia

It is always important in reminiscence sessions to acknowledge the difference between reminiscence and nostalgia. Whereas nostalgia tends towards remembering the past with a rosy glow, reminiscence allows for the truthful remembering of difficult as well as happy times and is essential for the purpose of running the session. Nostalgia tends to recreate specific events, places and rituals but doesn't allow for the reflection of how an individual might have experienced or felt at a specific time in the past.

- 1.Creating a photograph**
- 2.Making a reminiscence box**
- 3.Producing a life story book**
- 4.Working with children**
- 5.Drawing a time-line**
- 6.Rehearsing a scene**
- 7.Telling a story**
- 8.Writing a poem**
- 9.Painting a scene**
- 10.Making a collage**

Reminiscence Prompts

- 1.Photographs**
- 2.Old Objects**
- 3.Replica Objects**
- 5.New Objects**
- 6.Fabrics**
- 7.Odours**
- 8.Sounds**
- 9.Tastes**
- 10.Activities**

Subjects for Reminiscence

- 1. Childhood Games**
- 2. Names – how you got them – what they mean – do you like it?**
- 3. School**
- 4. Traditions and Rituals**
- 5. Beliefs and Superstitions**
- 6. Special Occasions**
- 7. Remedies and Medicines**
- 8. Holidays**
- 9. Entertainment**
- 10. Transport**
- 11. Food & Drink**
- 12. Shopping**
- 13. Family Life**
- 14. Grandparents**
- 15. Sport**
- 16. Social Life & Friends**
- 17. Jobs & Work**

Reminiscence Activities

1. Mime a job (or, 'What's my Line?')

A group member mimes a job they used to do, perhaps repeating the action until the group guesses the job. The group and/or leader might then ask the person about the job, as appropriate.

2. Mime a Sporting Activity

A group member mimes the actions of a sport they used to enjoy and teaches others how to copy the action. Can be used in an exercise session or as a warm up. Can lead to a discussion about sports, games and play with both verbal and physical reminiscences.

3. Mapping the Group

Identify North, South, East and West in the room then ask people to place themselves in the room according to where they were born. You will have to decide beforehand whether the area covered is a single town, country, or the world, depending on what you know about people's birthplace. You can also do this for other questions, such as:

- i) recent holiday destination
- ii) favourite holiday destination
- iii) furthest place travelled to
- iv) where ancestors came from
- v) where children live

1. Information Lines

Ask group members to organise themselves in line depending on questions to be chosen by yourself or group members, including:

- i) month of birth
- ii) age
- iii) height
- iv) number of children
- v) house number

or whatever the group wants to come up with

Activities 3. and 4. could easily be adapted for groups sitting down. Use a map to identify people birthplaces. Use numbered cards to give to people to indicate their position on the information line.

1. Introductions

Create a series of cards with statements about everyday events or experiences. Ask which apply to the group and create a pile of experiences the group have had and another for ones they have not. This could lead to spontaneous reminiscences. Examples on cards might include:

'I was born outside England'

'I had a crystal radio'

'I watched the Queen's coronation on television'

'I used Sunlight soap'

'I used dried egg in cooking'

(try to avoid using the word 'remember' as that can be a bit loaded for people with poor memory.)

2. Superstitions

Lead a group discussion about superstitions that people have. Ask what actions people might do to ward off bad luck. This group can also work well for relatives to recall the person with dementia's superstitions, if they are not able to do so themselves. Knowing about them may explain people's behaviour sometimes.

3. Write a poem

There are many ways that groups can write poems together.

- i) Using magnetic poetry letters, group members can contribute individual words that can be arranged to please the group's creativity.
- ii) Choose a theme, then ask the group to free associate on the colours, sights, sounds, nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs that come to mind when they think about the subject. Write down **all** suggestions then form them into lines and verses with the group.

1. Draw your home

Draw a favourite room in your home (or a past home) and talk to a partner about it. Or, direct someone else to draw it.

What Helps People to Reminisce?

- 1. Being relaxed**
- 2. Enjoying the company of others**
- 3. Trusting the group**
- 4. Having a purpose**
- 5. Respecting the integrity of the facilitator**
- 6. Having one's relationship with the facilitator recognised**
- 7. Believing one has a story to tell**
- 8. Being given full editorial rights**
- 9. Being asked one's opinion**
- 10. Being allowed not to participate**
- 11. Not being interrogated**
- 12. Not being judged or criticised**
- 13. Not being expected to recall to order**
- 14. Having one's preferred sensory style recognised**