

Creative Spaces information sheet - Sensory Trust

Activity: Memory postcards

Memories play an important role in maintaining our connections with people and places. This is particularly important for older people with dementia. We can use memories to help people with dementia to communicate about the past, present and future. Memories are not always about staying in the past; they can help us to understand a person in the present and lead to conversations about people's future hopes and dreams.

The Sensory Trust uses memories as a communication tool with people with dementia; discovering how the past can help us improve their quality of life. But how do we coax those memories out? This activity was designed for people with dementia but can also be used with people with learning or communication disabilities. It's low cost, easy to do and the finished product can be used to stimulate many conversations more than once.



Materials:

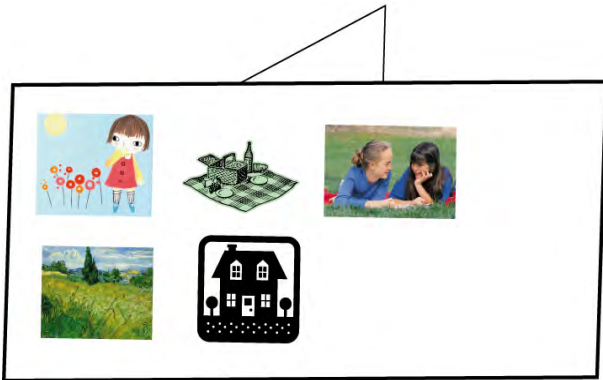
- A4 blank paper
- Piece of card – any length you like as long as it allows space to stick several images; we use A3 card cut into 3 pieces, each roughly 14" x 5.5"
- Pictures cut out of magazines, old postcards, old photos etc; images of whatever topic you want to cover. Sort them into subjects before the activity.
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Pen

Instructions:

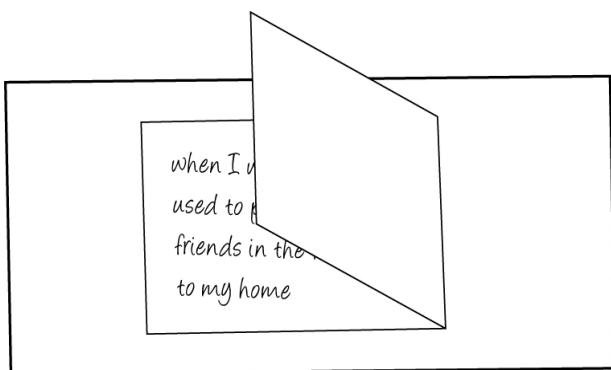
Lay everything out on a table before you begin. The aim of this activity is to help people communicate a memory about a specific topic. For example, you may want to find out if someone has a story or memory associated with their favourite outdoor place. This activity is suitable for a one-to-one situation or in a small group of 3 – 4 people.



1. Glue a folded piece of paper to the back of your postcard, so that you can open up the paper and write in it.
2. Lay the images out so that the various themes can be clearly seen
3. Select images that help you reveal the memory. If you're assisting someone else try not to influence their memory or images selected. Questions such as "where was your favourite outdoor place?" are better than "Did you like to walk in the woods?"
4. Using the glue, fix the images to the postcard on the opposite side to the folded paper; telling the story from left to right as if you were writing the words down



5. When you have finished, write the memory on the back, inside the folded paper



Now you can swap memories! Try and work out each other's memories using the images. Then read the words on the back to find out how close you were to the memory. You can use the finished postcard at any time to stimulate conversation or to re-connect a person with a place or just as fun to look at the images.

In brief

- 1 Lay out everything in advance.
- 2 Small groups work best.
- 3 Try not to influence someone's memory.
- 4 Use open questions to explore memories. Avoid using yes or no questions.
- 5 Don't forget to share the memories.

Creative Spaces

This information sheet has been produced in collaboration with Cornwall Care as part of the Creative Spaces project

CornwallCare

Because we're Individuals

Cornwall Care promotes people-centred care through their 18 care homes in Cornwall

www.cornwallcare.org



Sensory Trust

Sensory Trust promotes and supports the creation and management of outdoor spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, regardless of age or ability.

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