

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT: REMINISCING

If you wish to know the road ahead, inquire of those who have traveled it. (Chinese Proverb)

The advice of the aged will not mislead you. (Welsh proverb)

All wisdom is not taught in your school. (Hawaiian Proverb)

Everyone is the age of their heart. (Guatemalan Proverb)

Reminiscence is discussing and sharing events from the past. It is a way “to recreate what has gone before, embellish, intensify, relive aspects of their lives that gave great pleasure.” *Working with the Elderly*. Irene Burnside

It is a powerful tool that can be used for many positive outcomes. Reminiscing activities can be done individually or in a group. Group reminiscing is recommended because of the benefits that are derived by sharing of stories. The value of telling life stories includes: Helping the participants to

- Understand the uniqueness of being part of an “exclusive group” a cohort.
- Feel good about their past and present accomplishments
- Look at their life patterns and see the legacies they have given
- Realize that they have made a contribution to others
- Maintain a sense of identity, a validation of their special strengths and interests
- Maintain self-esteem in the face of declining health
- Gain support from others in facing life challenges

The value of reminiscing can be enhanced with facilitation techniques used by the group leaders. Leadership approaches can be adapted for groups with memory loss and problems with short and long term recall. To maximize the benefit of sessions, leaders can practice the following techniques:

- Remind of the social and cultural landmarks of the time (use time lines)
- Use “retrieval cues”, props that can be handled, smelled, listened to, looked at
- Repeat participants names and repeat what was said
- Use the NCFC (Touhey,1996) approach: recite name, give a compliment, state the fact, make a conclusion. Example: Natalie, that took “guts” to play hockey on an all boys team. Thanks for sharing, risks like that make us feel proud.
- Do not rush the process,
- Explore the memory in detail
- Discuss positive emotions attached to the memory
- Use touch as a communication tool
- Recall their successes; help remind them of what they are.
- Voice positive traits and patterns of group members
- Repeat past accomplishments with admiration
- Offer support for facing difficult issues, let the group offer support
- Ask for advice and wisdom from the experiences
- Validate good choices, caring actions, strength of character, hard work, relationships with others, attitude and sense of humor.

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Topics for reminiscing are endless. Events and parties can also be developed based on interests and experiences of the past. Exhibits, shows, writing projects and intergenerational activities can all be developed to encourage positive feelings through recall of one's past.

Names for groups include:

Those were the Days
Treasured Moments
Down Memory Lane
Remember When...
Moth Balls in the Attic (also a game by that name)
In Grandmas Attic
What's in the Trunk?
Wisdom Through the Ages
Memories are Made for Sharing
I Remember That!
I Had one of Those!
Front Porch Memories

Life Story Books
Memory boxes and Kits
Show and Discuss
Writing life reviews

Special event ideas include activities such as:

Antique Car Shows
"Church" suppers
Family Picnics
Heirloom Fashion Shows
"Community" Dances
Skits based on Home Remedies, The War Years etc.
Barbershop Quartets
Heritage Days
"One Day Museum"
Trunk Show

Reminiscence program ideas include:

Collage Making
Scrapbooking

There are abundant resources available for reminiscing from many companies. However, many of the reminiscing ideas and props can be found in thrift stores, garage sales, used book stores and on the internet.

Popular resources:

Music: Eldersong www.eldersong.com
Reminiscing Music of all kinds
Dover Publications www.doverpublications.com
Adult art books, stained glass books, reminiscing fashions, sports, automobiles, WW II posters
Reminisce Magazine www.reminisce.com
Good Old Days Magazine www.goodolddaysmagazine.com
Ideals Publications www.facebook.com/IdealsMagazine/
A Time to Remember
Time Life Books www.timelife.com
Creative Forecasting www.creativeforecasting.com
Decade time lines FREE! Download
The Legacy Project www.legacyproject.org
Gear intergenerational kits and life review kits

Old Blue Jean Flicks <http://objflickcs.com/> nostalgic movie clips
Free Stories http://www.goodolddaysmagazine.com/featured_story.php
Free images from 1860's to 1970s <http://images.google.com/hosted/life>

Reminiscing Activity-Automobiles

1. Choose a partner. Tell a story about a past experience that you have had with a car. Ask your partner to think about the first car that they learned to drive. Draw a picture of the car. Explore the memory. Title the picture.

2. Write 5 fill in the blank statements based on the topic of cars. Examples include:

The funniest thing about learning to drive a car was _____

The first car that I bought myself was _____ it cost _____

I would get in trouble if my parents knew I took the car _____

My favorite car of all time was my _____

3. Think of all the physical components of driving a car, fixing a car, maintaining a car. Make a list (think about the OLD Cars!)

Integrate “movement memories” into your discussion. Act out each movement.

4. Make a list of all the songs you can recall about “Cars”

5. Make a list of words associated with cars or driving

6. What sounds, smells, objects are associated with a car?