



How to Lead a Multi-Sensory Engagement Center in Memory Care Manual

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Multi-Sensory Engagement

Multi-sensory engagement is participation in activities that are focused on stimulating more than one sensory system at the same time to enhance the individual's physical and emotional well-being. The sensory systems include touching, seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting. Additionally, the sense of feeling or intuition is included which incorporates how the person reacts to the experience of sensory stimulation. Each of these sensory systems can contribute to the whole experience of the resident in memory care.

In addition to the sensory experience, reminiscence therapy principles are incorporated into these engagement centers. The resident is given the opportunity to engage with the sensory items but is also asked questions to enhance their engagement by thinking back in their life or discussing the experiences they had throughout their lives. This gives the residents the opportunity to remember memories and talk about them which stimulates cognition and thinking. With these questions provided in the manual, the staff will be able to help the resident ponder on the current experience and tie it in with a memory they may have.

Most older adults in memory care have cognitive impairment, which may include difficulties with memory and thinking patterns. The diagnosis that can lead to cognitive impairments includes Alzheimer's Disease and another type of dementia. Older adults who are diagnosed with any type of dementia are experiencing cognitive decline due to brain damage which impairs their sensory systems. Therefore, engaging the older adult with multiple sensory stimulation helps to increase the activity of the brain to enhance their experience as some sensory systems are more impacted than others.

The purpose of these engagement centers is for the resident to participate in an activity and to find some meaning in their daily life to enhance their quality of life and well-being. When engaging in an activity, the goal is participation above the outcome of how well they are performing. If they are painting, it doesn't matter how their painting is turning out as long as they are engaged by actively participating or watching others participating.

In order for the resident to experience the full multi-sensory experience, the staff will need to invest their time and energy as some items are not able to be left out due to safety concerns for the residents. The staff's reward through daily participation in sensory activities will reduce behavioral challenges as the residents experience enhanced well-being. Some items will be best through guided programming, where the staff will be required to lead the activity. Others will require less hands-on involvement from the staff by introducing the activity or item and allowing the resident to engage independently. Finally, other items will always be left out for the residents to have access to whenever they want to engage with the items. The resident may require a verbal prompt to notice the items that are available to them.

Sense of Touch

The sense of touch is stimulated by touching different textures, materials and experiencing how it feel. The materials can be given to the resident to manipulate independently, or the staff member can gently rub the material, such as a towel, yarn, or stuffed animal, on the person's hand or cheek to feel what the texture feels like. Be mindful of how the resident feels about someone else touching them and ensure that only appropriate areas are touched such as hands. Ask the resident to get permission to touch them.

Goal: The goal for this sensory stimulation is to give the resident the opportunity to explore different textures and objects to trigger memories of the past. The resident may want to feel something soft as a way for them to feel comforted or something rough because it may be familiar to them.

Sense of Sight

The sense of sight is stimulated by looking at different pictures, objects, and scenery. The resident will likely respond the most to visual stimuli that they are familiar with. Depending on the resident, they may have challenges understanding what they are looking at. For other residents, their vision may be the strongest sensory system which will allow them to respond best to this stimulus.

Goal: The goal for this sensory stimulation is for the resident to be able to connect with something they find familiar and interesting in the engagement center. Looking at the different pictures, objects, videos, and scenery in the center may be very enjoyable for the residents as it can help them remember memories of when they have experienced a similar experience. They may experience joy because they feel connected to the item. Take note of the themed engagement center that the resident feels most connected to and give them more opportunities to engage with that center. The resident may desire to look at certain pictures or items for longer than others so give them the autonomy to move on when they are ready.

Sense of Sound

The sense of hearing is stimulated by different sounds in their environment. Depending on the resident's ability to hear, the source of sound may need to be brought closer to the resident. Consider the use of headphones with some residents as they may be hard of hearing. In addition, draw attention to the sound that is played by the residents as they may not notice the sound because they may be focusing on different things. At times, the use of sound such as playing music in the background may be helpful and other times it can be overstimulating. Ensure to keep an eye on the residents and adjust as it seems appropriate.

Goal: The goal of this sensory stimulation is to help the residents remember different memories or reactions they had in the past. Through a song or sound they enjoyed, different memories and emotions can be remembered so that the residents can reminisce.

Sense of Smell

The sense of smell is stimulated by different aromas in the environment. The resident may have a sensitive sense of smell so ensure that the aromas presented are not overstimulating them. The scents can be introduced through various ways such as essential oils, food, spices, flowers, etc. Essential oils are known to produce a specific effect so ensure the appropriate oil is used during the specific time period.

Goal: The goal for the sensory stimulation is to give the resident an opportunity to trigger memories from a certain aroma. Frequently people will smell a specific aroma and will get reminded of the time they smelled that scent before. Ask the residents about what the scent reminds them of.

Sense of Taste

The sense of taste is stimulated by eating food of various textures and flavors and drinking liquid with different flavors. The resident's diet should be kept in mind to ensure they are adhering to their prescribed diet. If the resident is on a pureed diet, make sure they only are eating foods that are pureed. Be sensitive to allergies as well. Engage the resident while they are eating at meal time or snack to guide the resident to ponder on the flavors they taste and the memories that are triggered. If the staff is engaged with the residents, they may find mealtime more enjoyable and can eat more food.

Goal: The goal for this sensory stimulation is to allow the resident to explore different flavors that may have some striking tastes due to the strong flavors. While tasting the food, the resident may be able to reminisce on their favorite foods they used to enjoy and prepare for their families.

Benefits Of Sensory Engagement

The brain of someone who has memory impairment due to dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease or another type, is deteriorating as the disease progresses. The parts that are impacted in the brain include the cerebral cortex, which is responsible for executive function, storing and retrieving memories, sensory perception, and many more. Due to the brain changes, people with dementia experience challenging behaviors such as increased agitation, hallucinations, wandering, anxiety, and depression. These challenging behaviors decrease the person's quality of life. In addition, it may be challenging for caregivers to give these residents the appropriate care to address their unmet needs.

To help address these challenging behaviors, research has shown the benefits of multisensory stimulation and reminiscence therapy for individuals living in long-term facilities, such as memory care, who are experiencing cognitive impairment in the form of dementia. Research has found that multi-sensory stimulation enhanced mood, socialization and cognitive functioning including communication, feeling safe, alertness, and overall well-being (Mileski et al., 2018; Salmon Health, 2021; Samvedna, 2018). Reminiscence therapy has been found to have similar benefits such as reducing behavioral, decreasing psychological symptoms, and improving cognitive functions

(Behrman et al., 2014; Mileski et al., 2018). In addition to the benefits shared, research shows that with reminiscence therapy the residents develop a sense of trust with the staff as they recognize that the staff cares for them (Cooney et al., 2014).

Research shows that the residents who participated in these interventions were able to connect and communicate better with those around them in a more relaxed manner. They were also able to engage better with other people when they were participating in reminiscence and sensory activities (Mileski et al., 2018). When the staff interacted with the residents individually, there was an increase in verbal and non-verbal communication between residents, staff, and family members. The staff began to feel more connected and became more accommodating to the residents after they engaged in reminiscence and sensory therapies.

Participation in activities, especially those that are of interest to the individual, has been shown to have positive effects on people with AD. The goal is for the individual to be engaged in the activity and not the end product (Gitlin & Piersol, 2014). Researchers have found that participation can help reduce maladaptive behaviors and increase their quality of life (Gitlin & Piersol, 2014; Travers et al., 2016). Gitlin & Piersol (2014) continue further to say that being engaged in an activity provides a sense of purpose, self-worth, personal security and a feeling of accomplishment. Therefore, the themes for the sensory engagement centers were created based on the interests of the residents which were identified through interviewing residents and staff members and surveying the family.

These benefits are only possible if the staff and volunteers are investing their time to engage with the residents. Time spent with the residents may happen in group or individual settings, but the time should be devoted to the residents at that time. The staff or volunteers should actively listen to the residents when they are speaking and respond appropriately. The benefit the staff and volunteers will receive is the psychological and emotional growth of the residents. Through this growth, the resident may decrease in challenging behaviors which may make it easier in the long run.

Research has identified that a limiting factor to implementing these multi-sensory engagement centers is the lack of time for the staff. This is true, but staff should try to find time to engage with the residents in this way to build a sense of trust with the residents. Taking a few minutes to ask the resident questions while they are engaging with a sensory item will mean so much to the resident because they will begin to feel connected to someone. The residents long to feel that connection since they transitioned to live in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar people. In addition, volunteers should be encouraged to spend more time with each of the residents as they should have more time.

Considerations When Engaging With The Resident

This section covers what to be mindful of when engaging with the resident in memory care during simple conservation or activity. Engagement with the resident may be more successful when these tips are followed.

General Considerations

Approaching the resident: Approach the resident directly in front of them and not from the side or call their name to get their attention to announce your presence. They may not have good peripheral vision which will limit their ability to notice that you are approaching. We want to ensure that the resident is not startled by your presence.

Body positioning: Match the level of the resident. For example, if the resident is sitting down, you would want to lean, squat, or sit next to them. Your positioning matters when you are interacting with the resident. We do not want the resident to feel belittled which may decrease engagement.

Maintain eye contact: It helps to inform the resident that you are attending to them. Avoid looking down at your watch or looking around during engagement so it can show that you are in a rush or may seem uninterested.

Allow extra time for a response: The resident may require additional time to process what is said to them; therefore, they will require additional time to respond to you. It is okay if there seem to be awkward pauses. The resident's brain may not be able to process verbal communication as quickly.

Use positive language and approaches: Do not argue, scold, yell, talk loudly (when their hearing is fine), show anger, or make fun of the resident. The residents will be able to understand that they are not being treated fairly and may lose trust.

Encourage the resident: Use phrases that provide encouragement during participation to validate them, such as "great job" or "you are so good at this." These phrases may give the resident incentive to participate for longer.

Be aware of your facial expressions: Use smiles when engaging with the resident. Avoid frowning or showing anger.

Cueing: Allow the residents to do as much as they can to instill a greater sense of accomplishment. When the resident is no longer able to follow verbal directions, begin to use cueing to enhance their participation in the activity. Start with verbal cues, and if that type of cueing is not successful, proceed to the next type. The amount of cueing will depend on the stage of the dementia.

Verbal Cue

Use simple phrases with the least number of words to clearly instruct the resident what to do during the activity.

Examples: sit in a chair; it's your turn; turn the page.

Visual Cue

When verbal cueing is unsuccessful, use signals to direct the resident (pointing, touching, or handing the resident items.)

Example: point to the chair you would want them to sit in, or to the picture you want them to look at.

Tactile Cue

When verbal and visual cueing is unsuccessful, use a light touch when providing hand-over-hand assistance. Hand-over-hand assistance may be sufficient to provide neural feedback to allow the resident to complete the task.

Example: lightly touch the hand you want the resident to use in the activity, or guide the hand to the object you would want them to grasp.

Monitor the noise level of the environment: decrease the volume of different noises in the room during engagement to avoid distractions or over stimulation. You may want to turn off the TV or radio if you are trying to engage the resident in a conversation or different activity.

Considerations Specific to Multi-Sensory Activities

Choosing an appropriate activity: The activity should be tailored to the interests of the resident. Consider what they used to do when they were younger or ask what they are interested in now. Keep in mind their stage of dementia to help choose an appropriate activity. Those who are in the late stage of dementia may only be able to successfully participate in activities that are less demanding, such as touching something soft or listening to music.

Modify the activity: Any activity can be changed to allow success for the resident. The activity should not be extremely challenging or easy; otherwise, the resident may get frustrated or bored, respectively.

Set up the environment: the environment should be supportive of the activity.

- o Ensure there is adequate lighting where the activity will take place.
- o Adjust for optimal seating position, which includes feet flat on floor, back straight and the height of the table to be at waist level. Listen to the resident adjust their position in their seat.
- o Reduce the number of objects in the space for the activity to limit distraction or feeling overwhelmed.
- o Put out one item or activity at a time when the resident will notice it.
- o Change the item or activity after the resident begins to decrease their interest.

Engagement Center Themes

The following engagement themes were created to give variety to the residents due to their different interests. The staff can create themed days where all residents can participate with staff, volunteers, and other residents. The themed days can have guided programming to incorporate all senses to create an atmosphere that will simulate the theme with the best effort.

Some items included in the engagement centers are for guided participation only, where staff should be present when the resident engages with the item. Others are for independent use, where the resident is encouraged to engage with the items with or without staff present. The engagement centers should be available for the residents at any time. Staff can engage the resident when the residents are independently handling the items to converse with them to enhance the resident's well-being and quality of life.

Theme: Nature

The engagement center of nature is focused on all residents. Nature incorporates beautiful scenery of trees, flowers, bodies of water, and various kinds of animals. Most people will appreciate what nature has to offer. It brings happiness and peace as they see how beautiful the world is. The residents may remember the hikes they have been on or the other experiences they had with their loved ones.

Sense of Touch

Stuffed Animal

A stuffed animal is purposed to give the opportunity for the resident to cuddle the animal and pet it as if it were alive. Many residents have had animals or love animals. It may bring the resident back to the time they would take care of their pet.

Engagement Idea: The residents may independently carry the animal around and manipulate it as they see fit to give them some comfort.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you have pets? Which pet did you have?
- o Were they living inside your home or outside?
- o How does this "pet" feel?
- o Have you ever been to the zoo?
- o Which animal do you enjoy seeing most?



Package of Seeds

Many residents have had gardens before whether that was a vegetable garden or flower garden. Shaking the package to make a noise may be a calming and soothing sound as it brings them back to a hobby they once enjoyed doing.

Engagement Idea: Holding and pressing on a package of seeds may bring them back to the spring months when they would get the garden ready to plant their seeds. The resident or staff may shake the package to allow the resident to listen to the noise that it makes.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you have a garden? If so, what type of garden?
- o Did you plant from seeds or buy small plants?
- o How does it feel when you press on the package of seeds?
- o How does it feel when you shake the package to make music?
- o How does holding the package and hearing this sound make you feel?



Beach and Forest Sensory Bin

These sensory bins incorporate many of the senses (touch, sight, smell) that are found in those places. These bins may give the residents the feeling that they are at the beach or in the forest. Supervision will be necessary when engaging with these bins.

Engagement Idea: Give a bin to the resident who is seated at a table. Give them some space to explore the bin with extended time as needed. Bring awareness to the textures they feel, the scents they smell, and the items they see. Allow the resident to share the items with another resident to increase their engagement if they choose to. Turn on ocean waves as white noise while the residents engage with this sensory bin to enhance the sensory experience.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Do you like how the items (sand, sea shell, pine cone, etc.) feel?
- o Do you like how it smells? What does it smell like?
- o Do you enjoy what you are seeing?
- o Have you ever been to the beach or forest before? Do you have any happy memories?
- o What was your favorite part about being at the beach?

Sense of Sight

Fish Tank

A fish tank has been found to increase the food intake of residents. In addition, it provides a calming stimulus, which can improve perceptions of mood, anxiety, and relaxation (Glee et al., 2019).

Engagement Idea: Guide the residents to the fish tank or approach them when they are already looking at the fish tank. Point out the different fish, plants, and lights in the tank. Ask them a few questions while they are looking at it if they are interested in answering the questions.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Do you enjoy watching the fish?
- o Which one is your favorite to watch?
- o Have you ever had a fish tank?
- o Did you enjoy fishing? Where would you do fishing?
- o Do you like eating fish?
- o Did you cook with fish?

Laminated Photos

Gather photos that are bright and beautiful with different animals and sceneries. Looking at these images may bring joy from the beauty of the world we live in.

Engagement Idea: Read the description of the facts about the place or animal to the resident or ask the resident to read out loud. Give the laminated photo to them to hold until they are ready to move to the next photo.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Which picture is your favorite?
- o Have you seen this animal in person before?



Photos From Zoo Visits

These pictures are from different decades of people at the zoo. The pictures are purposed for the resident to reminisce the times they would visit the zoo with their loved ones.

Engagement Idea: Give the photo album to the resident to hold and allow them to turn the page when they are ready or ask if they are ready to turn the page before you turn it. Engage in conversations with the resident about the photos.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Which picture is your favorite?
- o Did you take pictures that looked similar?
- o Who did you like to go to the zoo with?
- o What was your favorite part about the zoo?

Sense of Hearing

Fish Tank

The sounds the fish tank makes may remind the resident of running water similar to rivers and waterfalls they may have experienced on hikes or walks.

Engagement Idea: Draw attention to the sound the fish tank makes to the resident such as the filter. Engage them further with questions.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Do you hear the sounds the fish tank is making? What do you hear?
- o What does the sound remind you of?
- o How does this sound make you feel?
- o Have you ever been next to a waterfall?
- o Did you ever swim in a river or lake?
- o Did you enjoy swimming?

White Noise of Nature

White noise with the sounds of the ocean waves, waterfalls and other forms of water have been found to provide a soothing and calming effect (Pereir, 2016).

Engagement Idea: White noise can be softly played in the background during the engagement with the items in the centers or turned on specifically to bring relaxation at the end of the day. In addition, bring awareness to the resident about the white noise as they may not notice it is playing.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o How does hearing this sound make you feel?
- o Do you enjoy listening to it?
- o What does it remind you of?
- o Does it feel like you are at the ocean?

Video:

- o [Relaxing Therapy Music for Stress Relief, Anxiety, Memory Loss, Alzheimer’s Disease, and Dementia by Ohshun Studios](#)

Sounds of Animals

The sounds of different animals may help the residents gain a better experience as if they were at the zoo. They may be reminded of when they saw that animal in person.

Engagement Idea: Play a video that incorporates the sounds animals make. A trivia game may be incorporated by having the residents guess the different sounds of the animals. The trivia game can stimulate the brain to maintain working memory skills. You may have to pause the video to give more time for the residents to answer the trivia. Try to allow everyone an opportunity to guess the sound before moving on to the answer.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Which animal makes this noise?
- o How does this activity make you feel?
- o Did some of the animal sounds trick you?
- o Which sound is your favorite?

Video:

- o [Guess the Animal Sound Game | 31 Animal Sounds Quiz | Multiple Choice by Quiz Madness](#)
- o [Guess the Animal Sound | Game Multiple Choice by PlayQuiz Challenge](#)

Sense of Smell

Diffuser With Essential Oils

Only use the diffuser and oils when directly supervised and put away after the engagement. Essential oils have many different benefits to them. Each one is known to instill a different mood. When using essential oils, use one appropriate to the time of day it is used. You want to calm a resident down to help them wind down in the evenings or during times of distress, in which case you would use the citrus bliss, lavender, or lemon essential oil.

Engagement Idea: Drop a few drops into the container filled with water and diffuse for about 20 - 30 minutes. Do not add too many drops, as the scent may get overstimulating. Instruct the residents sitting in that room to inhale as if they are smelling flowers to get a good smell of the scent being diffused. Drop a few drops of essential oil in a small tube for essential oils that the resident may hold and smell it from. Ensure to keep close supervision on all the tubes given to residents.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o What do you smell?
- o Do you like this smell?
- o How does it make you feel?
- o Does this smell remind you of anything?

Essential Oil Known Effects:

- o Citrus Bliss – calming agitation and alleviating depression and anxiety (Rescue, 2021). Therefore, use in the evening to wind down or when residents may need some relaxation.
- o Rosemary – stimulates the brain to help remember past experiences and enhances speed and accuracy for managing daily tasks (Rescue, 2021). Therefore, use this oil in the morning.
- o Bergamot – relieves depression by increasing hormones that make you feel good (dopamine and serotonin). It can also reduce anxiety by replacing it with contentment, relieve headache and muscle tension, improves sleep, and enhances the quality of life (Rescue, 2021). Therefore, this oil should be used later in the day.
- o Lavender – relaxes muscles and nerves. This oil should be used when the resident is distressed or before bed (Rescue, 2021).
- o Lemongrass – helps to relieve stress, anxiety, and depression (Cleveland Clinic, 2021).
- o Eucalyptus – helps to relieve pain. It also helps clear stuffy noses and is known for its anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties (Cleveland Clinic, 2021).

Continued on next page

- o Peppermint – boosts alertness and assists with memory by increasing blood flow to the brain. It also helps decrease anxiety, relieve headaches, support digestion, and relax muscles. This oil may be used any time of day (Cleveland Clinic, 2021; Rescue, 2021).
- o Tea Tree – this oil is known as an antiseptic, antimicrobial, or antifungal oil (Cleveland Clinic, 2021). It can be used during flu season.
- o Lemon – helps calm agitation, increase interaction, increase cognition, and reduces anxiety and depression (Cleveland Clinic, 2021; Rescue, 2021). It also helps to relieve pain (Cleveland Clinic, 2021). Therefore, this oil can be used when the resident is distressed.
- o Geranium – promotes relaxation and helps to alleviate depressive moods. It has been found to be beneficial for neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s disease due to reducing inflammation (Whelan, 2019). Therefore, use it in the late afternoon to evening.
- o Citronella – helps to lift mood and reduce fatigue. It also has been found to promote wound healing (Seladi-Schulman, 2019). Therefore, use oil in the morning to early afternoon.
- o Sandalwood – helps to reduce anxiety, supports wound healing, and fights bacteria (Schaefer, 2021). Therefore, it may be used in times of distress or during flu season.
- o Clary Sage – helps to decrease anxiety and calm the mind, reduces depressive feelings due to decreasing stress hormone (cortisol), and has antibacterial properties (Whelan, 2017). Therefore, it may be used in times of distress.
- o Rose – decreases pain levels, anxiety and stress, improves symptoms of depression, increases sexual desires, and protects against harmful bacteria (Stanborough, 2019). Therefore, it should be used in times of distress or sickness.

Smell Flowers and Herbs

The scent of flowers or herbs may be something the resident finds very familiar and comforting. The resident may have had a garden; therefore, smelling the plants they grew may be something they did on a weekly or daily basis. They may remember the hard work they put into their gardens for many years. Flowers may also stimulate memories of special occasions or their spouse bringing them flowers.

Engagement Idea: Take a few residents out to the courtyard to smell the flowers and herbs in the gardens. Another idea is to bring in some flowers and herbs for the residents to smell inside the community. The resident may be asked to guess the type of plant it is based on how the plant looks and its scent.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you have a garden?
- o Which type of garden did you have?
- o Which plant was your favorite to grow?
- o Did you water the plants daily?
- o Did you have plants inside the house?
- o Did you find it difficult to take care of your plants?

Sense of Taste

Healthy Nature-based Snacks

Snacks are a great way to incorporate the sense of taste into the engagement center. Snacks such as berries, fruit, vegetables, multi-grain goldfish crackers, and animal crackers can be incorporated into the nature-themed center.

Engagement Idea: Guide the resident to sit by a table to enjoy the snack provided for the day. While enjoying their snack, a few questions can be asked to further engage the resident.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Which type of fruit is your favorite?
- o Which type of vegetable is your favorite?
- o Did you cook a lot with vegetables?

Theme: School Life

This engagement center will be for everyone since everyone was required to attend grade school. In addition, some of the residents were teachers, which may take them back to when they were teaching students. Lastly, many residents were parents, so they may remember when their children attended school. This engagement center is meant to bring back memories from childhood or adulthood. They will be able to reminisce their friends while playing games, their accomplishments, and other memories that stand out to them.

Sense of Touch

Mini Desk

The resident likely spent a lot of time sitting at a desk while they went to school. They may be able to imagine the many hours they sat at a similar desk in school as they manipulate the physical object.

Engagement Idea: The desk is an object that the resident may explore by touching with their hands, visually looking at it, or manipulating it with other objects, such as placing cards on the desk or placing a doll/stuffed animal on the chair.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you like going to school?
- o What did you like most about school?
- o Did you have a desk that looked similar to this one?



Chalkboard and Chalk

The resident may have used chalk to write on a chalkboard to answer questions in class or used to study. Using this writing tool may bring back many memories of when they attended school.

Engagement Idea: The resident may manipulate the chalkboard independently by looking at the chalkboard. Feeling the texture of the board and the weight of it. Through guided participation with staff, inform the resident to write answers with a trivia game, doodle on the chalkboard, or guide them through a simple drawing with a few other residents. Draw the resident's attention to the smell of the chalk or to the feeling of chalk powder on their fingers to stimulate other senses to get a better experience with the item.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you have to use the chalkboard when you were younger?
- o Did you ever get called on to write on the board?
- o How did you like to study?
- o How does using chalk make you feel?

Sandwich Napkins

The resident may have used sandwich napkins to wrap their sandwiches for lunch, or they would do it for their children.

Engagement Idea: Allow the resident to manipulate it independently to touch how soft it is or ask them to fold the napkin as if they would put it away. In addition, use the napkin to make an activity with a snack (described later in the sense of taste section).

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Is the napkin soft?
- o How does feeling this napkin make you feel?
- o Did you use napkins like these during lunch?

Used Pencils and Erasers

Used pencils and erasers may be able to stimulate memories of when the resident was required to complete many assignments in the classroom and at home for their classes.

Engagement Idea: Use only during guided participation with supervision. Hand out sheets of crosswords, mazes, connect the dots, etc., for the resident to participate in pencil and paper activity. If the resident makes a mistake, guide them to erase the mistake. Draw the older adult's attention to when they would need to complete assignments during school with pencils.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you like to use pencils or pens while in school?
- o What was your favorite activity that you participated in at school?
- o Did you enjoy completing assignments during class?

Notebooks

Notebooks can be a way to trigger memories of the notebooks the residents had while they were in school. They may remember the journal prompts they had to write about or the personal journals they used for writing down specific experiences.

Engagement Idea: The resident may hold the notebook independently and look through the pages. The resident may want to write something down as they would usually do. Give the resident a writing tool to write in the journal. Keep an eye on them while they have the writing tool. Ask for the writing tool back after they are finished.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you like to write?
- o What topics did you like to write about?
- o Is this the type of notebook you used to have?
- o Do you remember a specific prompt a teacher asked you to write about?
- o How often did you journal on your own?

Sense of Sight

Report Cards

These cards from the 1940s are meant to be a tangible item that will remind the resident of the times they would bring report cards home to their parents or when their children would bring them home. These memories may give the resident a sense of accomplishment if they enjoyed school. In addition, it may give the resident memories of how proud they were of their children when they would bring home good report cards.

Engagement Idea: The resident may look through the report cards independently or share the experience with another resident or staff member.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did your report cards look similar to these?
- o What did your report cards look like in grade school?
- o How did going to school make you feel?
- o Were you a student who cared about your grades?
- o Did you have children who attended grade school?
- o What was your favorite memory of your children going to school?
- o Did your children bring home report cards that made you happy?
- o If you were a teacher, did you enjoy the times you had to write report cards?
- o If you were a teacher, did looking back at progress reports make you proud of your students?

Pictures Related to School

Pictures of children in school or school buildings in the past are included to reminisce on the times the resident spent in school. The pictures are meant to remind the resident of their school memories. A can picture says a thousand words that the resident may experience.

Engagement Idea: Look through the pictures together and discuss how the resident feels or if they have similar experiences. Ask them questions or allow them to look through the pictures independently.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o How does looking at these pictures make you feel?
- o What was one of your favorite memories in school?
- o Describe one of your closest friends in grade school.
- o Did the school environment change when you sent your children to school?

Laminated Poem

Poems are a form of art that many hold a lot of meaning. Many people appreciate the carefully written poems from the heart of the author. It may be a way to allow the resident to think about many different things.

Engagement Idea: Read the poems to the resident or allow them to read them silently or aloud. The poems may be songs that can be sung together to stimulate another sense. Find the tune of the song on YouTube by searching the name of the song. If you do not know the song, ask the residents to teach you the lyrics to the song. Thank them for their help. Guide the resident in a discussion on a topic related to the poems.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o What stood out to you from this poem?
- o Did you read poems when you were in school?
- o How does the poem make you feel?
- o Did/Do you like poems?

School bus picture frames

The brightly colored picture frames may trigger memories of when the resident was waiting for the bus to pick them or their children up to go to school. They may remember sitting with their friends as they drove to school in the mornings or drive back home in the afternoons.

Engagement Idea: The resident may independently hold onto that picture frame and look at the pictures of children. The resident may touch the frame's textures to feel its curvature.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you ride the bus to get to and from school?
- o Did you like riding on the bus?
- o Did your children ride the bus?
- o What was your favorite memory of the bus?

Sense of Hearing

School Bell

Hearing the sound of the school bell may remind the resident of going to play for recess, lunchtime, or going to class. This sound can be comforting because it may be familiar to them, or they can become stimulated by it. Watch the reaction of each resident closely and stop playing it if someone is uncomfortable. Be mindful of how loud the bell is rung as it may be overstimulating to some residents.

Engagement Idea: Ring the physical bell with the resident or play the video with the sound. Only bring out the bell when a staff member supervises this engagement center. Allow each resident to ring it if they wish.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o What does this sound remind you of?
- o How does this sound make you feel?
- o How does it feel to ring the bell?
- o Does this bell sound similar to the bell rung at your school?
- o Did someone have to ring the bell manually at your school?

Video:

- o [Antique Cast Iron Crystal Metal No. 2 School Yard Bell w Yoke BEAUTIFUL SOUND by GISO](#)

Chalkboard Writing

Someone writing on a chalkboard may stimulate memories when the resident was sitting in class. It may be a satisfying sound to hear, which may bring a calming effect because it is something they remember.

Engagement Idea: Draw attention to this sound being played in the background while participating in different activities in this engagement center.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Was writing on chalk a daily task for the teacher in school?
- o Did you ever write on a chalkboard?
- o Did your hands ever get dirty because of the chalk?
- o How does hearing the sound of chalk make you feel?
- o Did you get called on to write on the chalkboard?

Video:

- o [ASMR: Chalkboard Writing \(sound effects 5 hours\) by ASMR Nature Sounds](#)

Sense of Smell

Chalk and Used Pencils

The smell of chalk and used pencils may help the resident remember some memories from school. Supervision is required when these items are given to the resident. Ensure that the resident does not consume the items.

Engagement Idea: Ask the residents to smell it when they are engaging in the guided participation and describe if they remember anything.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Does the smell of chalk or pencils remind you of something?
- o Do you enjoy the smell?
- o Does this smell bring you back to the days you used to go to school?

Older Books from Grade School

Schools were filled with books, especially the library. The smell of books may remind the resident of when they would to the library go as a class or independently. They may be reminded of the times they were in college or university.

Engagement Idea: The resident will be able to manipulate the book independently by flipping through the pages or reading. The book can be read to the resident to stimulate the sense of hearing. The resident may not be able to read the small print, so reading to the resident can give them some enjoyment.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did the books smell similar when you were in school?
- o Which book did you enjoy most in school?
- o Did you enjoy reading books?
- o Which book is your favorite to read?
- o Did you like to go to the library?
- o Did you get a reward at school for reading at home?

Sense of Taste

Lunch Sandwich

The resident may have brought their own lunch to school each day. Sandwiches were likely a part of the routine lunch they enjoyed at school.

Engagement Idea: Serve a small portion of a sandwich, such as a turkey or a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, for a snack while wrapping it into wrapper or a sandwich napkin. Draw the resident's attention to the taste and smell of the food. Incorporate it with a few other items from this engagement center to stimulate all senses.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you have sandwiches for lunch?
- o Which sandwich did you like most?
- o How does eating a sandwich make you feel?
- o Do you have any memories of fun things you would do at lunch when you were at school?
- o Did you make your children sandwiches for lunch?
- o Did you wrap the sandwiches up with a wrapper or cloth?

Theme: Sports

This theme was created because many residents received enjoyment from sports. Some identified sports were baseball, bocce ball, tennis, football, and golf. This engagement center will allow the residents to experience a leisure activity that they once enjoyed playing and watching to bring back memories of the times they spent with their loved ones.



Sense of Touch

Mini Golf Club Bag

A golf club bag is necessary to help carry the golf clubs throughout the range. This mini version bag may help the resident remember the many times they had to carry it throughout the golf course.

Engagement Idea: The resident can manipulate this item by opening and closing the zippers, touching the material, and placing items inside to remember the times they had a full-sized bag at the golf course. The resident can independently engage with this item or with another resident or staff. Ask the residents questions to get to know about their experiences with golfing.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you enjoy watching or playing golf?
- o What was your favorite part about the game of golf?
- o Did you play/watch for a long time?
- o Were you a member of a golf course? If so, what was the name of it?
- o Was playing golf expensive?
- o Did any of your loved ones play golf?

Small Sport Figurines

The basketball and golf figurines allow the resident to touch the item to feel the curvature and textures on the figurines. They may look at them to see a 3D model of a person who plays the sport. The resident may have had something similar as decor in their room.

Engagement Idea: Ask the resident questions to lead a discussion about their favorite sport as they manipulate the figurines independently.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Do you prefer basketball or golf?
- o Have you played either sport?
- o Did you enjoy watching any of these spots?
- o Did you enjoy another sport more?
- o Which team was your favorite?
- o Is this how you would dress to go play the sport?

Kid's Baseball Cap

One way to represent your team when going to ball games (or anywhere) is to wear the team's logo on a baseball cap. Many people associate the cap with the sport of baseball, hence the name.

Engagement Idea: The baseball cap can be touched to feel the texture and attempted to be tried on. Maybe the resident has their own cap; ask them to wear it next time they go to their room. They can compare it to the one included in the engagement center. Ask them to spot the differences and explain which cap they like better.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o How does this baseball cap feel?
- o What color did you prefer in hats?
- o What team did you like to represent?
- o Did you wear these kinds of hats when you were young?
- o Do you have any that you still like to wear?

Gold Medals

Gold medals or trophies are given to 1st place winners in some sports. The resident may remember if one of their favorite athletes or sports teams received these medals. If the resident played sports, they might have received a medal themselves. The resident can reminisce with this item as they touch it and wear it.

Engagement Idea: The resident may be able to independently manipulate the gold medal by holding onto it with their hands, feeling the texture of the necklace or medal, and wearing it on their neck. Guide the resident through these tasks if they do not independently do so. Ask them some questions to further reminisce about the item. Games can be played, and the resident can receive a gold medal for winning to wear for the day—games such as trivia, bingo, or other board games.

Continued on next page

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you ever receive a medal after winning a sports game or any other accomplishment?
- o Did one of your favorite athletes or team receive a medal before?
- o How does it feel when you or your favorite athlete receives a medal?
- o How does this medal feel like?
- o Does holding this medal make you happy?

Sense of Sight

Baseball Stamps

These baseball stamps were used to attend baseball games at a discounted price. The resident may have used these before, which may bring back memories of getting one of these stamps when attending a baseball game.

Engagement Idea: The resident can see and independently manipulate the small booklet to receive more sensory input with this item to receive a greater connection to it. The resident may want to discuss their experiences with using these booklets with another resident. Give them that space to have conversations with each other.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Have you ever used this stamp booklet?
- o Did you like baseball?
- o What was/is your favorite baseball team?
- o What game did you see? Did they win that game?
- o What did the game feel like to you?
- o Did you go with your friends or family?

Baseball Cards Collection

Collecting baseball cards was a popular hobby in the 80s. Some baseball cards were very expensive, and others were mass-produced, which decreased the card's value. Some cards were up to 5 to 6 figures. The resident may have had a hobby of collecting these cards or knew someone who had collected them.

Engagement Idea: Allow the resident to look through the baseball cards at their own pace independently. Questions can be asked to increase the level of engagement. Some of the cards have the prices written on the back of them. Engage the resident to guess the price of the baseball card to stimulate the brain even more. The resident may find that more entertaining.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you ever collect baseball cards?
- o Did you have a large collection?
- o Did you ever get a card signed?
- o How does looking at these baseball cards make you feel?
- o Which team was your favorite?

Sporting Event Tickets

Holding onto tickets from a game may trigger memories that the resident has of when they bought tickets and when they would stand in line to enter the stadium. Maybe the resident will remember the tickets they tried to buy, but they could not get a hold of those tickets.

Engagement Idea: The resident may independently look at and hold the tickets. They can read what is written on the ticket. If they need help, read what it says to the resident. Ask them to identify the game the ticket is for and if they knew the teams that were playing.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you have physical tickets to enter the game?
- o When did you have to buy the tickets, ahead of time or at the door?
- o How much were the tickets when you bought them?
- o Did you feel like the tickets were too expensive sometimes?

Sense of Hearing

Crowd Cheering Videos/Sound Effects

The sound of stadiums cheering for sporting events may be a comforting and exciting moment for some residents because they may have been to live sports games or watched them on TV. For avid sports fans, it may bring happy moments of when they would watch the games and feel similar competition they used to feel when it was a close game.

Engagement Idea: Watch a video listed or play a recorded live game on the IN2L with a few residents. Guide the residents to cheer for their teams as they are at a game.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o How does the crowd cheering make you feel?
- o Did you like to cheer loudly for your team?
- o Did you like when crowds would cheer at games?
- o Did the cheering ever get too loud for you?

Videos:

- o [Loudest Crowd Reactions in American Sports History Compilation by BK Highlights](#)
- o [‘That is ridiculous’: brilliant bowls shot lights up World Indoor Championships by Guardian Sports](#)

Sporting Event Songs

These songs are some that the residents may find familiar when they watched sporting events in the past. The songs may bring enjoyment to the residents as they listen to or sing along with the songs.

Engagement Idea: Encourage the residents to sing along if they know the songs because they will enhance their experience to put bigger smiles on their faces. Many other songs can be played, but a few are listed below.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o How does the crowd cheering make you feel?
- o Does this song bring you joy?
- o Did you like when crowds would cheer at games?
- o How does this song make you feel?

Videos:

- o [Queen- 'We Will Rock You' !!!! Sports Anthem NFL, NBA, NHL, MLB, NCAA by JosborneJ](#)
- o [Frank Sinatra and Gene Kelly - Take Me Out to the Ball Game by Golden Hollywood Fan](#)
- o [Whitney Houston - Star Spangled-Banner by CavBuffaloSoldier](#)
- o [Kansas City Chiefs Tomahawk Chop - Loudest Crowd in the World \(Guinness World Record\) by Jordan D](#)

Sense of Smell

Smell of the Food Served

When watching the game, people like to eat or munch on things. The smell of the food they ate when they watched the games may bring back memories of those times. The sense of smell can be stimulated through the snack or food offered during this engagement center.

Engagement Idea: Serve the resident a snack (some ideas included below) that they would have enjoyed while watching sporting events. Draw the resident's attention to the smell of the food to encourage an enhanced sensory experience.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o What do you smell?
- o Does it smell good?
- o How does this smell make you feel?

Sense of Taste

Hot Dogs

These are one of the most popular foods that are served at ball games. The residents can get served hot dogs for lunch during this engagement center.

Engagement Idea: The resident can choose which toppings (ketchup, mustard, relish, mayonnaise, etc.) to place on their hot dog. Guide the resident to independently place their favorite condiments on their hot dog but offer help if needed.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you like to eat while watching sports games?
- o Which type of food did you eat while watching sporting games?
- o How does this food make you feel?

Crystal Light and Country Time Lemonade

These drinks were popular sporting event drinks that the resident may have enjoyed.

Engagement Idea: Serve the resident some of this beverage to stimulate their taste buds. Inform the resident which drinks they are drinking by showing them the bottle. The resident may want to take a closer look at the bottle to help them remember when they enjoyed the beverage. Allow the resident to manipulate the empty bottle independently.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you enjoy this beverage during sporting events?
- o Which drink was your favorite?
- o Did you have a favorite flavor?

Theme: Daily Home Life

This engagement center is focused on giving the resident an opportunity to experience productivity by allowing them to accomplish something they used to do. The items in this center are included to remind the resident of the daily tasks they used to do to take care of the house or the family. Engaging with these items may allow the resident to think back to the responsibilities they used to have to do.

Sense of Touch

Shoe Polish Set

The resident may have polished their own or their family's shoes before going out. Polished shiny shoes used to be a sign of someone who was well-kept. People used to polish their shoes to go to school, work, and church.

Engagement Idea: Allow the resident to manipulate the polishing kit independently or with another resident. They may want to clean the shoe with the brush as they normally did when they were younger. Prompt them to clean a shoe if they do not independently start doing it. Any shoe can be used for this engagement.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you polish your shoes or your family members' shoes?
- o Did you enjoy polishing your shoes?
- o How often would you polish them?
- o How old were you when you polished your shoes?

Telegraph Device

The telegraph was used to send out telegrams for communication. The people would go to a telegraph company, such as Western Union, to send out a message. The resident may have used it, or they may have at least seen it being used when they were a child.

Engagement Idea: Allow the resident to manipulate the telegram as if they would be using it to communicate with someone. Give the resident time to feel the moving parts and the texture of the plastic. Draw the resident's attention to the device's clicking sound to enhance the sensory experience.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Have you used a telegram before? Did your parents use it?
- o What was it like to use it?
- o Did you ever go to Western Union to send out a message?
- o How does it feel to hold one right now?

Folding Laundry

Folding laundry was likely something the resident used to do on a weekly or daily basis.

Engagement Idea: The resident may independently want to fold shirts, baby clothes, or clean hand towels to allow them to accomplish something. Draw the resident's attention to the texture of the material they are folding. If they do not independently participate, ask the resident to help you fold the laundry to get them to engage in the activity. They may readily help you accomplish this task with great satisfaction. Compliment them for helping you with this task.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you do the laundry for the family? If not, who was in charge?
- o Did you like doing laundry?
- o Did you have to hang your clothes on the clothing line?

Baking Tools

The resident most likely baked desserts, such as sugar cookies or cupcakes, for their family or had their spouse bake some. The residents can utilize the tools such as an apron, oven mitts, measuring cups and spoons, and whisks to help make the dessert.

Engagement Idea: During guided participation, allow the resident to participate in helping with the process by putting on an apron, mixing with a whisk, putting ingredients into the mix using the measuring tools, trying on the oven mitts, and decorating. Decorating may be as simple as putting single-colored frosting on the dessert or giving a few colors to increase creativity. The resident will be able to touch many tools they used to use when they would bake.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you bake when you were younger?
- o Did you enjoy baking?
- o Did you have similar tools when you baked?
- o Which tool is the most helpful?
- o Did you enjoy sharing the desserts you baked?
- o What was your favorite dessert to bake?

Knitted Beanie

The resident may find this item very familiar. The resident may have liked to knit items such as socks, beanies, and mitts for their family. If they didn't knit themselves, they may know someone who did or may have received it as a gift. The resident can reminisce on the item.

Engagement Idea: The resident can independently hold onto the knitted beanie as they feel the texture and try it on. Ask the resident to feel the material and describe how it feels. Ask them to try it on and give a mirror to see how it looks on their heads.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Do you know how to knit?
- o Have you knitted a piece of clothing before?
- o How long would it take you to make that item?
- o Did you make it for yourself or your family?

Washboard

A washboard was used as a tool for hand washing clothing throughout the 1900s. People to this day may still use it for smaller, delicate articles of clothing. Many residents may have a lot of experience using this board to wash the clothes for the whole family. The resident may reminisce on the times they used this board or maybe have seen someone wash clothes with this method.

Engagement Idea: The resident may independently hold onto the washboard and manipulate it independently. The resident may want to wash some clothing to give them a sense of purpose. Give a few hand towels or baby clothes and a bowl, with or without water, to give the resident an opportunity to wash some clothes. Ask them to help you do some laundry. The resident may gain satisfaction by participating in this activity. If water is provided in the bowl, close supervision is required during the entire activity.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you ever use a washboard to wash your clothes?
- o Did you see your loved one washing clothes with this washboard?
- o Did you switch to using a washing machine?

Sense of Sight

Stamps

The resident may have used these stamps to help them save some money as we use coupons these days. The purpose was to fill the booklet with stamps and then redeem it for the cash value of \$3 for the movie and thrifty shoppers' stamps. They would receive stamps based on the money they would spend.

Engagement Idea: Allow the resident to hold onto and look through the booklet while they reminisce on when they used to collect these stamps to get a discount.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Have you or your family ever collected stamps?
- o Did it take a long time to fill the booklet?
- o What other kinds of stamp booklets did you have?
- o How did it make you feel when the booklet was filled?
- o How does it make you feel to hold this booklet?

Photos of Daily Life

Pictures include playing with children, cooking, watching TV, working, doing laundry, talking with other people, grocery stores, etc. These pictures may represent the things that the residents may have done previously. While looking through these photos, the resident may feel a lot of emotions because these photos may look similar to some they have with their families.

Engagement Idea: The resident sits down with the pictures in their lap or on a table as they look through each picture. Give the resident the autonomy to move on to the next photo when they are ready. Do not rush them to look through the photos because they may have a lot of thoughts to process.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o What did you enjoy doing on a daily?
- o Did you enjoy household tasks?
- o Did you like going to work?
- o What was your favorite part of the day?
- o How do these pictures make you feel?
- o What brought you joy each day?

Telegram Message

The letter included in this engagement center was sent out in 1922 through Western Union. This message may look familiar to the resident as they may have used telegram to communicate. The resident may remember calling or visiting the Western Union to ask them to send out a message to their loved ones or for business.

Engagement Idea: Read the message to the resident or ask them to read it out loud. The resident may want to look at this letter independently as they think about the times they would send letters for different purposes.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Is this what you remember telegrams to look like?
- o How long did a telegram typically take to reach someone?
- o Was it expensive to send out a telegram?

War Rations Book

War rations were used due to the shortage of supplies during the war. This book may be a sensitive item to the resident because it may remind them of troubling times. Although, the resident may appreciate reminiscing on how they got through those challenging situations. Highlight how strong they are to get through those difficult times.

Engagement Idea: Allow the resident to look through the stamps in the book. Ensure the resident enjoys the item by checking in with them; if not, kindly introduce the next item. Assure them that those times have passed, and the war rations are no longer used because we have abundant supplies in our stores today.

Continued on next page

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you use one of these books to get supplies, such as groceries?
- o How did it feel to use stamps from this book to get items?
- o How do you feel holding this booklet?
- o What is something you enjoyed getting with one of these stamps?

Old Cookbooks

Old cookbooks may bring a lot of joy to some residents as they may have used a cookbook to make meals for their families. The styles of older cookbooks and the smell may stimulate the memories of when they would be in the kitchen for hours each day to ensure the family had good meals. Even if they did not use cookbooks, the resident may look through the pictures and find some meals they enjoyed making.

Engagement Idea: The resident may like to look through the cookbook independently. Others may enjoy looking through the cookbook with another person. Look through the cookbook with a resident and discuss the food that looks good or if they have made a similar meal before.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you use cookbooks?
- o How many cookbooks did you own?
- o Did you have a favorite cookbook that you used the most?
- o How did you learn to cook?
- o Did you enjoy cooking?

Sense of Hearing

Songs from Daily Life

Songs are an excellent way to engage the resident as they allow people to experience lots of joy and help to remember memories.

Engagement Idea: Play music that the residents knew from when they were younger in the background as they engage with the items from the engagement center. Play artists like The Beatles, Elvis Presley, The Rolling Stones, etc. In addition, the residents may want to sing along with the songs, so allow them to sing along. Sing with the resident and compliment their singing, as it will encourage them to continue. A few songs are included below.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you enjoy listening to music every day?
- o Did you like to listen with your friends?
- o What kind of music did you listen to?
- o Did you like to dance?

Videos:

- o [Get Rhythm by Johnny Cash](#)
- o [Theme From A Summer Place by Percy Faith](#)
- o [Stand By Your Man by Tammy Wynette](#)
- o [Can't Help Falling in Love by Elvis Presley](#)

Sense of Smell

Fresh, Clean Laundry

Smelling clean laundry may take the resident back to when they were required to do the laundry for their family.

Engagement Idea: Bring some freshly washed laundry to the resident to fold and guide them to smell the items.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o What can you smell?
- o Do you like the smell of freshly cleaned laundry?
- o What part of doing laundry was your favorite?
- o How does smelling this make you feel?

Dryer Balls with Essential Oil

Doing laundry has a nice, refreshing, and clean smell, which can be introduced by putting a few drops of essential oils on a dryer ball for the resident to smell. Ensure the resident is supervised to avoid excessive aroma and consumption of the oils. More information about essential oils is included in the nature engagement center section. Be mindful of the essential oil being used at the specific time of day.

Engagement Idea: Drop 3-5 drops of the essential oil (information about essential oils is included in the nature section of the manual) on the dryer ball and allow the resident to smell the ball. After the resident smelled it, ask them to pass it to the resident sitting next to them.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you use dryer balls?
- o Did you have a dryer for a long time?
- o Did you enjoy the smell of clean laundry?
- o How do these scents make you feel?

Fresh Bread or Baked Goods

The smell of fresh baked goods may be nostalgia for the residents. With such a scent, they can be taken back to the days they would bake for their family. Some residents may have had a routine of baking fresh bread weekly. The residents can reminisce about those days when they would sit at the table together to eat dinner as a family. It may give them some joy to remember those days.

Engagement Idea: The sense of smell can be stimulated during a cooking activity or snack time. Encourage the resident to breathe in deeply to enhance the sense of smell.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Does this scent remind you of when you used to baked?
- o Did you ever bake your own bread?
- o What other things did you like to bake?

Sense of Taste

Make Desserts

After making some desserts, the resident may want to try them, especially if the room has that aroma.

Engagement Idea: Allow the resident to try the dessert they made together as a snack. They may receive more enjoyment from eating that dessert since they were the ones who made it. Ask them to rate the dessert they made. If they give a bad rating, mention how you will try better next time.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o How does this dessert taste?
- o What dessert is your favorite to eat?
- o Did you prefer to bake or cook for your family?

Theme: Traveling and Vacation

Many of the residents did a lot of traveling in their lives. Traveling for vacations may have brought the resident a lot of joy. They may have lots of experiences to share with people about the sights they have seen. The purpose of this engagement center is to allow the resident to reminisce about when they would travel and experience the feelings they used to get from traveling.

Sense of Touch

Small Suitcases

Two small suitcase-like items are included in this engagement center, one of which is designed to carry wine bottles. The resident may have had a similar type of suitcase or travel bag when they were younger. The leather is genuine leather which has a very soft texture to it. Touching these items may trigger memories of the suitcases they had. The resident may begin to remember some of their trips and the times they would need to pack for a trip.

Engagement Idea: The resident can independently manipulate the items one at a time. The resident may feel the texture of the leather and open the suitcase to see what is inside. If the resident doesn't do it independently, guide the resident to perform those tasks. The resident may want to pack up a suitcase. Set some items in front of the resident and ask them to help you fit the items in the suitcase. They find this activity enjoyable since they may be familiar with it.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Did you have suitcases that look like this?
- o Did you have larger suitcases?
- o What could you use this bag for?
- o How does this material feel?
- o Do you like how it feels?
- o Did you like to pack or unpack better?

Sense of Sight

Picture Books of Different Locations

Picture books have a lot of different pictures of the location they are capturing; the resident will be able to experience the place by looking at lots of pictures of the same place. Picture books may also include descriptions of what is pictured to give more insight to the resident.

Engagement Idea: Look through the picture book with the resident and allow them to describe the experiences they may have had if they traveled to that specific location.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Have you ever traveled to this location before?
- o What was your favorite part about this location?
- o Did you enjoy the food they had to offer?

Guess the Place of Origin

A game of trivia can bring more meaning and a sense of accomplishment when they are able to correctly guess the answer. The images that are shown can be beneficial to the resident as they are visually stimulated.

Engagement Idea: Play a video that incorporates pictures of food, flags, and monuments from around the world. A trivia game may be incorporated by having the residents guess the different origins of food. The trivia game can stimulate the brain to maintain working memory skills. Staff may have to pause the video to give more time for the residents to answer the trivia. Try to allow everyone an opportunity to guess the sound before moving on to the answer.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o How does this activity make you feel?
- o Did some of the pictures of food trick you?
- o Which food is your favorite?

Videos:

- o [Guess the Food Origin \(with Name and Picture\) by Quiz Wizard](#)
- o [Guess the Country by its Monument | Guess the Landmark Quiz by Time2Quiz](#)
- o [Guess The Country By Its Famous Place Quiz! By Quizzlery](#)
- o [GUESS the COUNTRY by its Flag | Quiz for Flag learners | Flag quiz | Guess the flag by Qizzy Fizz](#)

Sense of Hearing

Songs About Specific Locations

Songs about a specific location can enhance the resident's experience because they are experiencing multiple senses simultaneously, such as hearing the music and seeing the place on video. This experience can have a more significant effect on the resident to receive more enjoyment. It brings them closer to actually being at the location.

Engagement Idea: Turn on videos of songs they once enjoyed that include moving images of a location.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o How do you feel after watching these videos?
- o Do you enjoy watching these videos?

Videos:

- o [Frank Sinatra - New York, New York by Louis Eduardo Andrade Ojeda](#)
- o [Vintage Travel Music: A Playlist to Beat the Winter Blahs by Jake Westbrook](#)

Guess the Sound of Language

Hearing the different languages may allow the resident to remember when they have heard that language before, which can help them remember some vacations they went on.

Engagement Idea: Play a video incorporating different voices from around the world. A trivia game may be incorporated by having the residents guess the different languages. The trivia game can stimulate the brain to maintain working memory skills. Staff may need to pause the video and rewind to give more time for the residents to answer the trivia. Try to allow everyone an opportunity to guess the sound before moving on to the answer.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Which country is this language from?
- o Did some of the sounds of languages trick you?
- o Do you speak another language?
- o Which language is your favorite to listen to?

Videos:

- o [Guess The Language By Voice - Language Quiz by Quiz Monster](#)
- o [Guess the Language \(From Text\) #1](#)

Sense of Smell

Spice Painting

Painting with spices can stimulate the sense of smell with the strong aroma that spices give off. Certain spices originate from different parts of the world and are known to be used by different cultures.

Engagement Idea: This activity is only for guided participation; thus, residents should be supervised at all times during the activity. Make the mixture for paints with different colors beforehand. Hand out a blank paper or paper with a picture on it for the resident to create their own masterpiece. Encourage the resident to smell the spice paint and share what the spice reminds them of.

Recipe: [PLAY | FALL SPICE PAINTINGS](#)

- o 1 cup Water
- o 4 tsp Cornstarch
- o 4 tbsp Flour
- o 1 tbsp each of your selected spices (one type of spice per color)

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o What does it smell like?
- o Which smell is your favorite?
- o Which color do you like most?

Paint colors (Conry Davis, 2021):

- o Red: sumac, cayenne pepper, chili powder, paprika
- o Yellow: curry creates a vibrant yellow
- o Light yellow: ginger
- o Orange: turmeric
- o Light brown: cinnamon, ground allspice, nutmeg
- o White: onion powder, garlic powder
- o Dark brown: cocoa, vanilla paste
- o Purple: beet powder
- o Green: parsley, cilantro, rosemary
- o Black: black pepper, black cumin

Sense of Taste

Herbal Tea

Sharing a cup of tea with another person or a few people is what many parts of the world do. The tea the residents drink can be from different parts of the world.

Engagement Idea: The residents can sit at the table with tea and a snack. At the same time, they can converse with the staff or another resident about where the tea and snack is from.

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o What does this tea taste like?
- o Do you like this tea?
- o Do you prefer tea or coffee?
- o What did you prefer to eat along with your tea?
- o Did you enjoy drinking tea often?
- o Which type of tea is your favorite?

Pastries Foods from Different Countries

During snack time or meals, the resident can enjoy food from a specific country, state, or city. The location of origin should be highlighted so the resident can have the experience as if they were at that specific location. The resident may enjoy the food while listening to music from that specific location.

Engagement Idea: The resident can sit at a table with a few other residents while eating the same food item and discussing it with the other residents or staff.

Ideas for Pastries:

- o Mochi – Japan
- o Cannoli – Italy
- o Churros – Spain
- o Concha – Mexico
- o Baklava – Turkey
- o Brownies – United States
- o Cardamom Buns – Sweden

Ideas for Food:

- o Hummus – Middle East
- o Fish and Chips – United Kingdom
- o Tacos – Mexico
- o Kebab – Turkey
- o Pizza – Italy
- o Non-raw Sushi – Japan
- o Curry – India

Guiding Questions for Engagement:

- o Are you enjoying the food you are eating?
- o Which country, state, or city has the best food?
- o Did you like to try different food?

Frequently Asked Questions

If the resident demonstrates distress when engaging in sensory stimulations. What do I do?

If the distressed behavior is emotional, like crying or worry, ask the resident if they would like to stop participation for a short break. Listen to the resident or watch for non-verbal cues such as head movements. If they answer yes, ask them to give you the item or ask them to place it on the table, then give them time to regulate themselves. If giving them space does not seem to work, reassure them that they are in a safe place and are cared for. Introduce calming activities like turning on calming music and looking through pictures that interest the resident (Gitlin & Piersol, 2014).

If the distressed behavior is aggressive, let them play out the aggression while ensure the resident and other people are safe. Do not try confronting or discussing the behavior with them since they are not able to reflect on their behavior. Take note of the possible trigger of this behavior and try to avoid it with the resident. A calming environment may help to reduce the chance of distressed behaviors.

Should I stop engaging the resident with sensory items if they do not respond to them?

No. If the resident does not respond to a sensory item, try to engage them with another item to stimulate another sensory system. They may not react due to decreased interest in the item or need additional sensory stimulation to respond. Ultimately, the primary purpose of this sensory engagement is for the resident to participate in an activity. For example, if they are not reacting to looking through the pictures of animals, turn on the video to play the trivia game of guessing the animal sounds.

The resident doesn't want to answer the guiding questions or seems annoyed by the questions. What should I do?

If the resident does not want to answer questions, give them the space to engage with the items independently, as they can still benefit from the experience. Let them know that you are there when and if they want to engage in conversation with you. Give them autonomy as they may have many thoughts going through their mind. They may want to process these thoughts independently. Check back in with the resident if they lose interest or need assistance.

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