

Sensory Activities

Benefits of Sensory Activities



Aging reduces the acuity of the five senses: hearing, sight, taste, smell and touch. These types of sensory changes can affect daily activities, making it more difficult for individuals to communicate and interact with the world around them. In LTC homes, sensory activities can offer residents an opportunity for comfort, reminiscence, expression, and meaningful occupation. When in isolation, sensory engagement needs to be stimulated to enhance a resident's emotional well-being and cognitive activity.



Supporting Sensory Engagement



- Sensory activities can be adapted to increase or decrease levels of stimulation in response to individual resident needs and preferences.
- Ensure the activity taps into one or more of the five senses to achieve stimulation of mood and cognition.
- Encourage opportunities for reminiscence of the resident's long-term memories, identity, cultural and spiritual traditions, hobbies and life experiences through sensory activities (e.g. looking through a personalized sensory box filled with items important to the individual—holiday photos, driver's licence, favourite perfume, a religious memento).
- Consider the importance of sensory activities for residents living with dementia and residents at end of life as a way to connect and communicate without words.
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues from the resident that suggest they are tired, uncomfortable or not enjoying an activity (e.g. grimacing, calling out, not responding/withdrawing). Consider pausing/stopping or offering something else.
- Have enough supplies to minimize sharing during a program and select supplies that can easily be disinfected between each use.



Creative Sensory Activities

- **Therapy dolls:** Lifelike baby dolls can provide a sense of companionship, reminiscence of parenthood, and can encourage a sense of care giver purpose.
- **Robotic pets:** These pets make lifelike noises and movements, have soft to touch fur and are designed to bring comfort and companionship to those who enjoy the presence of a pet.
- **Dementiability - The Montessori Way:** <https://dementiability.com/who-we-are/#methods>
Montessori-based activities can help to maintain hand-eye coordination, range of motion, and cognitive function (e.g. sorting objects such as buttons and cubes, matching socks, and folding towels).
- **Hand massage:** Offers a sense of connection through comforting touch.
- Aromatherapy can be incorporated to stimulate the sense of smell:
 - Calming scents: Eucalyptus, Lemongrass and Lavender
 - Mood enhancing scents: Orange, Mango and Coconut
- **Music:** Familiar songs can stimulate memories, movement and encourage reminiscence.
- **Room 217 Pathways:** <https://www.room217.ca>
- "Music care" activities and resources that support the therapeutic benefits of music, especially at end of life.
- **Dial-a-Story:** Call [905-946-0787](tel:905-946-0787) to access Story Soup Enterprises Group story readings three to 10 minutes long with new stories every week to keep listeners engaged.
- **Independent iPad games:** Using the blue iPads, residents can engage either independently or with support in games such as Tic Tac Toe, Checkers, Solitaire, Dominoes, puzzles, etc.
- **Cooking/Baking:** Activities such as bread making and cookie baking can stimulate the taste and smell senses and encourage reminiscence of time spent in the kitchen.
- **Obie system:** <https://obieforseniors.com/>
- Interactive gaming system that projects onto any surface - tabletops, floors, and walls - encouraging active play through touching, moving, and hand-eye coordination skills.
- **Independent and group games:** Stimulate cognitive activity with word search, crosswords (in large print, with a marker and pen), and trivia games using a mobile whiteboard.

