



Dignity in Dementia

Helping you support people with dementia

www.dignityindementia.org

ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS FOR RESIDENTIAL & NURSING HOMES

- For Individuals Isolating In Their Rooms
- For Care Staff When Activity Staff Aren't On Shift
- Ideas For Quick & Easy Connections
- For Families When Meeting Relatives With Dementia Through A Screen

Dignity in Dementia currently hosts Care Home Managers Zoom Support Meetings, which enables managers to talk regularly to each other, share their thoughts and experiences and offer support to each other. During the first meeting, the managers suggested that we also bring Activity Co-ordinators together via zoom, so that they can meet up virtually, share ideas and offer encouragement to each other.

As we all know, the current pandemic has had a major impact on all residential and nursing homes, including in the ways they provide activities for their residents. Therefore, whilst many restrictions are still in place, we thought we would create this leaflet in order to provide some suggestions for activities. We plan to share it widely amongst residential and nursing homes in Cumbria and elsewhere.

Special thanks go to Connie Blundell, the Activity Co-ordinator from The Old Vicarage Care Home in Allithwaite, Grange-over-Sands and Sean Moore from Summerhill Care Home in Kendal, as well as to the other members of the Activity Co-ordinators group.

At Dignity in Dementia, we focus on improving the **emotional wellbeing** of individuals with dementia and consequently all the suggestions included will help with this. Clearly you need to match the activity to the individual and their personal preferences and interests.

Most of the activities included are suitable for people with and without dementia. However, isolating residents with dementia may require additional assistance to get the most from them. Of course, you may find that one or two of our suggestions are too complicated for some, in which case we suggest you change focus to something else you know they'll enjoy.



Section 1 is for residents who are isolating because they have just moved in or are longer term residents who are displaying symptoms and need to be kept away from others. It is also useful for residents who prefer their own company and like to stay in their room.

Section 2 includes activities that care staff can easily pick up and do when Activity Co-ordinators aren't on shift.

Section 3 includes ideas for 30 second connections that staff can make when walking past a resident, perhaps on their way to carry out a task. They can really help to enhance a person's mood and make them feel valued and special. We suggest that you copy or replicate it and then laminate and place on the staff room/office wall so that your staff see it regularly.

Section 4 is suggestions to help family members engage more easily with their relative when they are able to visit.

ACTIVITIES FOR RESIDENTS WHO ARE ISOLATING

- **Box of personal items** - Prior to a resident moving in, ask the family to put together a small box of their personal items relating to their hobbies and interests that could help keep them occupied during the isolation period. Examples of things to include could be puzzle books, a sketch book and coloured pencils or an adult colouring book, knitting needles and wool, magazines, CDs and a CD player. They will know their relative so should be able to do this fairly easily. You will need to ensure they bring it to you at least 3 days before the person is due to move in, so that it can be placed in quarantine ready to come out and placed in their room ready for their arrival.
- **Personal Playlist** – a personalised playlist that includes specific music that is special to an individual can really help boost their mood. Before the person moves in, ask the family to pull together a personal list of songs/music and if possible save them to a device they can easily listen to. If saving the list to a device isn't possible, the Activity Co-ordinator can play some of the songs on an iPad or tablet, when they are with them. See Playlist for Life at <https://www.playlistforlife.org.uk> to learn more about the power music can have on individuals with dementia (and others).





- **Daily/weekly news stories that relate to their own personal interests** - This works well even for those who have a newspaper subscription; with more of a focus on public interest items, news from the local area, and even perhaps 'on this day' historical milestones. Chatting through what you've found will build a connection and help the new resident to feel welcomed.

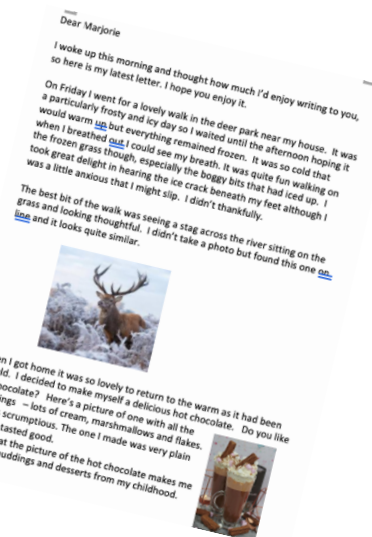
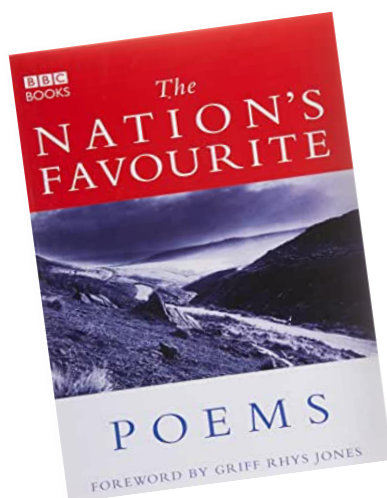
- **Quiz/Riddles challenge** - Most Activity Co-ordinators are likely carry out a weekly quiz and this can be adapted for an isolating resident on a one-to-one basis with the Activity Co-ordinator producing a typed version of the questions. The resident can complete their contribution in their own time and if the home has a leader board, they can find out where they are on it, once the results are in.
- **Adult colouring** – Downloading adult colouring sheets from <https://www.justcolor.net> might be uplifting. These can later be laminated and used for future wall displays. If a resident enjoys this, adult colouring books can be acquired at very little cost.
- **Care/pamper packages** - Can contain basic items like hand cream, a nail varnish, body spray, hairspray, lip balm – a nice mix can be put together for about £5. Especially good for welcoming new female residents.
- **Fun Beauty Session** - This is a creative way to encourage self-care even within isolation and build the confidence of those not feeling their best. Residents might be encouraged to try something new.
- **TV Schedule with personalised recommendations** - This could be printed from the internet or a modified TV times with items highlighted/stickered to indicate programmes scheduled that might be of interest to them. Again, this is a nice task to complete with the new residents input as it can generate conversation and give the Activity Co-ordinator further information about the new resident's tastes and interests.



- **Movie afternoons** - These can be films that are playing on the television, DVDs or streamed on Netflix, Sky and Amazon via an iPad. The occasion can be enhanced by printing off information from the Internet Movie Database (IMDB) in the format of a theatrical programme. Popcorn and movie snacks can also be offered, and a complimentary quiz can be produced to follow, relating to the film.
- **Guess the flavour/Smell** - This can be done with flavours of crisp, fizzy pop, herbs etc. Residents are challenged to taste or smell each sample and then either guess what the smell/flavour is or match it to a list of correct answers. Each participant will have their own pre-prepared selection of samples to avoid contamination and if the activity provider collates the answers after to the activity, even the isolating resident can see how their answers compared to the rest of the group.
- **Personalised timetable for the week** - this can be filled in while the resident is present. Items might include bath day, fish and chip Friday, Saturday newspaper, phone/facetime call with a family member, a particular programme on the television - anything happening during the week, even mundane things to bring about a sense of routine, normality and to give the resident small things to look forward to.
- **Crosswords/word search personalised to the residential home** - Using an online crossword generator: questions can include the name of the home, what was for lunch that day, names of the carers, facts about the residents, how many toilets the home has etc. - This provides a great opportunity for new residents to interact with carers passing in and out and builds a sense of familiarity and connection to the home community.
- **Tasting afternoons** - (Usually in conjunction with a group tasting event occurring at the same time) Residents receive a plate of small samples of food to taste pertaining to a theme e.g. Tastes of America, Breakfast around the world, Cheeses - possibly in place of the evening meal. The tasting plate will come accompanied by a menu with information about each item and can also include a scoring card for the resident to make notes about which items they most enjoyed.



- **Birdwatching** – If possible, place a bird table outside the window so the resident can see the birds feeding from it. If that isn't feasible consider fixing a feeder with suction cups to the resident's window, so long as food can be added to it easily.
- **'Things we love about you'** - This works best when the isolating resident has already spent some time in the residential community. The activity provider can provide a poster with a picture of the isolating resident in the middle and invite other residents or family members to choose words of affirmation that describe them, or short anecdotes to stick around the picture. Presenting the isolating resident with the poster provides reassurance that they still have a place within the community and that others are thinking of them despite the separation.
- **Penpal scheme** -The activities provider can request cards and letters from the local school. After being quarantined, the letters can be laminated and shared with the isolating residents. With the support of the Activity Co-ordinator, a pen-pal scheme can also be facilitated within the home. This is a nice way to welcome new residents: even a card with a short message of welcome from the existing residents can provide them with reassurance and a sense of belonging.
- **Poetry reading** - Residents can be given a short collection of poems relating to a theme depending on the time of year e.g. School days, Spring, Christmas. The Activity Co-ordinator can offer to read or take turns with the resident to read aloud each poem and then discuss the context, imagery or memories the poem brings about. This works best if the activity provider has pre-prepared prompts for conversation to follow.



- **Daily devotionals** - If your resident is religious, you can support them by offering daily devotionals/readings. We suggest you make contact with a religious leader e.g. Vicar, Priest, Rabbi, Imam and ask if there are any daily notes or readings that can be used.
- **Live Religious Services** – Again check with a religious leader for ways to help individuals of faith to access on-line services.
- **Streamed Musical Concerts** – Look on-line to find streamed musical concerts.
- **Sporting Sweepstake** - This can take place when any popular sporting event is on. If you are able to run one with money, residents can place small bets (50p/£1) from their room and receive a betting slip in return. After watching the game, they can receive any winnings or prizes. Alternatively, you could use monopoly money or organize a cashless version where residents make predictions about the sporting event before it takes place and the resident with the most accurate prediction wins a small prize.
- **Armchair exercise** - This can be as short or as long as the isolating resident is comfortable with. Some residents might prefer to be left with a short list of exercises they can try in privacy; others can be encouraged by a favourite song that has actions e.g. Knees up Mother Brown or YMCA. Residents rarely want to exercise in a formal sense but can often be encouraged by your example to simply clap along or tap their feet along to a familiar song.
- **Community craft projects** - Residents isolating might still enjoy the opportunity to contribute to a craft project produced by the home as a whole. Projects such as a patch work blanket or a 'big art attack' can be produced in small parts by many residents and later put together and displayed together. This gives the isolating resident not only something meaningful to do but also a sense that they are a valuable, contributing member of the home community.
- **Jigsaws** - Jigsaws are always popular and can be found in unlimited designs and difficulties, including some with a small number of large sized pieces created especially for people with dementia. Jigsaws also work well because carers popping in and out can contribute even when they have very little time.



SUGGESTIONS TO ENGAGE RESIDENTS WHEN THE ACTIVITY CO-ORDINATOR IS NOT ON SHIFT

The following activities are likely to be embraced by care staff, if they are presented as 'something the Activity Co-ordinator has prepared that can be easily delivered in their absence. The task of providing the activity will feel much less imposing and more like 'shared down time' for residents and staff. Managers might want to encourage staff to get involved with activities by highlight the potential personal fulfilment staff are likely to feel when supporting residents in this way, whilst Activity Co-ordinator's need to draw attention to what's available and where it is kept.

- **BINGO** - If the residential home already has a Bingo set (dry-wipe boards work best), this can be facilitated with little to no preparation. Most residents enjoy the predictable rhythm of Bingo and if you don't know the popular Bingo calls, they will be happy to teach you. Prizes don't have to be significant: a bar of chocolate or a packet of biscuits is enough.
- **Quiz or Riddles challenge** - (Pre-prepared by the Activity Co-ordinator) - often carers might feel intimidated at the prospect of delivering a formal quiz so pre-printed quiz sheets can feel more accessible. The quiz sheets can be handed out and carers can spend time with residents one-to-one, or encourage collaboration between residents until everyone has completed their sheet. Once the sheets are completed the carer can either mark and return the sheets or announce each answer and ask the residents to self-score.
- **One-to-one walks** - Residents often enjoy the opportunity to get some fresh air and one-to-one attention. By limiting it to a one-on-one activity, residents don't feel pressured to walk further than they feel they are able, and carers are able to limit the walk to whatever time constraints they have.
- **Adult Colouring** -This activity can be adapted for variety. 'Mystery colouring sheets' can be found easily on Pinterest which is similar to a colour-by-numbers: as each section is coloured a picture is revealed. **Warning: Adult mystery colouring sheets are also easily found on the internet so it's worth working out what the mystery picture is before sharing it with residents**



- **Feed the Birds** – On a good weather day, invite a couple of people to put bird seed on bird tables and/or help fill bird feeders.
- **The 'yes/no' game** - The aim of the game is to respond to several questions without using the words 'yes' or 'no'. Little to no preparation is required if you have purchased the boxed game (approximately £12). Be aware that it works best if the carer delivering the game is able to adapt the difficulty of the questions, depending on the ability of the resident. There is no need to keep score for this game and residents will enjoy the short-term mental challenge and the comedy of the inevitable failure as the challenge progresses.
- **Giant Jenga** - This game is simple but works well in groups of any size. Giant Jenga can be acquired for as little as £10 and is well worth the cost when considering price per use. No preparation or clean-up is required and although some residents might prefer to just watch as everybody always enjoys the anticipation of the tower falling. The sense of community as residents' each take turns, together with any passing staff members, really adds to the fun of the game.
- **Movie afternoon** - As listed in the above section. This can be pre-advertised and organised by the Activity Co-ordinator, so that all the carer needs to do, is encourage the residents to attend.
- **Facilitating a special environment** - Pub, cocktail hour, afternoon tea etc. This activity works best when all departments are coordinated. If the kitchen is due to produce afternoon tea to celebrate Mother's Day for example, carers can support the event by putting on a pre-prepared playlist of music, eating with the residents, pouring tea and promoting discussion around the meal. Residents often sit in silence at mealtimes and having the friendly encouragement of a carer can set the tone of the occasion and stimulate conversation whilst building a rapport with the residents.





- **Q-Ball** - A beach ball, pre-printed with 'getting to know you' style questions e.g. 'What's your best recipe?' or 'What was the best date you've ever been on?' Is passed round the circle and residents take turns to answer a question when they catch the ball. Residents especially enjoy this game when the carers offer information about themselves too. Q-Balls can be themed for different occasions such as School Days or Christmas memories.
- **Who's in the bag?** - This game can be pre prepared by the Activity Co-ordinator. Famous names are put into a bag and participants take turns to pull a name out and have the rest of the group guess who they are. It often helps to provide a prompt sheet of appropriate questions.
- **Countdown** - Countdown kits can be bought online or made and laminated before the session. Sometimes the group's concentration won't last for more than one round, however the game can be repeated as required. The alphabet version of Countdown tends to be more popular than the number version.
- **Painting Stones** – for the home's garden or local community.
- **Virtual Tours** – a range of virtual tours are available on the internet. For example, The British Museum, The Louvre. You can also look at the animals in various zoos such as Chester, Edinburgh and San Diego. If you have a central screen connected to the internet several people may like to watch at once, otherwise use a tablet or ipad to show individuals.

- **Dominos, Scrabble, Jigsaws**
- **Cultivating Memories** – get a pack for free from Dignity in Dementia
(info@dignityindementia.org) and use the cards to ask questions about garden memories.



- **Simple domestic tasks - Polishing cutlery/Peeling potatoes /Folding laundry.** This works best where there is no fixed time frame in which the task must be completed. Individual residents can be encouraged to help carers with simple domestic tasks that they do as part of their role. Including the resident brings about a sense of autonomy and can engage individuals who don't join in with formal activity sessions. It's an easy option for one-on-one time without pulling the carer away from their essential duties.



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New
CULTIVATING MEMORIES Project



A great winter project to do with a relative with dementia who has previously enjoyed their garden. It's likely to help them feel happy, engaged and valued. We will send a pack of A5 photographs with questions that promote gardening memories, together with a scrap book to record their recollections. All we ask is that you take a photograph of any pages of interest and send them to us, so that we can produce a gardening memories booklet. When this is completed you'll receive a copy of it to share with your relative.

Only 100 packs available so order yours soon – available for people living in Cumbria and North Lancashire
Email: info@dignityindementia.org or ring Diane on 07771 682378

Our Cultivating Memories project has been designed in partnership with Recovery and Time CIC




IDEAS FOR QUICK & EASY CONNECTIONS

You don't need long to help individuals feel connected, valued and special. Here are some simple activities you can do in 30 seconds or less.

- Smile, make eye contact, use the person's name and say hello. Ask how they are feeling.
- Give a compliment e.g. "I love that cardigan on you," "green really suits you" or "your eyes are sparkling today."
- Use what you know about the person to induce a memory, e.g. "Tell me again about when you took your kids to the seaside."
- Sing a short song.
- Do a jig.
- Tell a funny story or joke.
- Point to something close by and talk about it together.
- Look out the window together and comment on the birds or the weather.
- Show them a photo of your family.
- Give a hug, if company policy allows.
- Ask for their opinion e.g. "I'm not sure about my hair like this, what do you think?"
- Give a hand or shoulder massage.
- Blow some bubbles.
- Blow up a balloon and bat it to them.
- Look at a picture in a newspaper or magazine together.
- Ask for advice "Ann can you advise me about my scones, they just don't rise. What do you think I'm doing wrong?"
- Try on silly hats
- Have themed bags available and take out an item to discuss.
- Ask what their favourite musical/place is.
- Find out what National Day/Week it is and share information about it e.g. 2nd February is National Hedgehog Day and National Ukulele Day. Go to www.nationaltoday.com to print off a calendar.



ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES WHO ARE VISITING

This section specifically relates to family members visiting an individual with dementia. At the moment, visits are still taking place from behind a screen which is making conversation significantly more difficult for those with dementia. Therefore, our suggestions aim to make the situation easier and more enjoyable for both parties.

- Place a **laminated weekly newsletter**, timetable or printed pictures in the visiting area that relatives can use to prompt conversation about what the resident has been doing.
- Rotating the **artwork** on the walls of the visiting area can also be a stimulus for conversation, especially if the decoration relates to the occasion or time of year.
- The **Yes/No** game can be adapted if sheets are pre-printed and laminated. Similar games like **Pictionary** or **charades** could also work if the challenges are pre-prepared along with instructions for the visitor.
- Encourage the family member to bring along **pictures of a memorable family event**. If the family can email over the pictures digitally, they can be accessed from an iPad on the day or printed out for the resident to look at when their visitors arrive.
- Suggest that family take an item along to help promote a reminiscence discussion such as a picture of the person's favourite place or a previously loved pet. Or offer them a card from our Cultivating Memories pack so they can talk about a gardening memory – email info@dignityindementia.org to see if they are still available.
- If the care home allows it, take along a **family pet**.



Dignity in Dementia

Dignity in Dementia is an award winning Community Interest Company based in Arnside and operating throughout Cumbria and North Lancashire. To find out more about us please visit our website at <http://www.dignityindementia.org> and follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/dignitydementia>

Email: info@dignityindementia.org



Thanks to staff and residents of The Old Vicarage Care Home for letting us use some of their photos. Other photos of people are stock images, or from free to download image websites such as Unsplash.com and Pexels.com.

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