



# **COMMUNICATION**

ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT AND  
IMPROVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

# WHAT QUALITY OF LIFE MEANS FOR ME

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## **PURPOSE**

To enable individuals to express what is important to them.

## **WHAT YOU'LL NEED**

A whiteboard or flipchart, pens and paper.

## **WHAT TO DO**

Explain that quality of life includes the right for everyone to live life in the way that they wish without harming other people. To do this we need to look forward to the future and communicate to our families and friends what we want and how we wish to live.

1. Ask group members to discuss and say what is important to maintain a good quality of life. The suggestions can be written on a whiteboard or flipchart. This might include being able to:
  - » Maintain dignity
  - » Be respected
  - » Practise their faith
  - » Have companionship
  - » Stay independent
  - » Make own choices
  - » Be secure
  - » Take part in family life
2. Now hand out paper and pens and instruct participants to think for a moment and list three things which they want in future as part of their life. They can start with the words:

*Three things I want in the future are:*

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)

3. When completed, invite each group member, in turn, to share at least one of their wishes. As they share them, ask if this is something they can achieve for themselves or if they will need assistance. Discuss. Encourage other group members to suggest ways in which they might ask for assistance to help carry out their wishes.

### **COMMENT**

Many of the things people want in order to maintain their quality of life are fairly simple and straightforward to put in place, and it can make such a difference to their lives.



# **MEMORY**

ACTIVITIES TO HELP WITH MEMORY

# THIS IS MY LIFE

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## **PURPOSE**

To maintain and improve mental capacity and help memory retention.

## **WHAT YOU'LL NEED**

No particular materials unless you plan something special and, of course, tea and biscuits or cake.

## **WHAT TO DO**

Invite participants, in turn, to share with the group what has been happening to them over the past week. They may have had a visit from a family member, gone on a trip, taken part in a craft activity, watched a movie, done some gardening, read a book, listened to music, visited the dentist or outpatients, painted a picture, written a letter or spoken to a grandchild in a different country using Skype.

Encourage other group members to ask questions about the experiences to help individuals enlarge and say how they felt about the events. They may have done very little or been bored doing something. Other participants can then make suggestions about different things they could do during the coming week. Do make sure that everyone gets an opportunity to talk about something that has happened to them or they have done.

## **COMMENT**

Many older people lack the opportunity to talk to others about the current events in their lives and what they have been doing. Talking about and discussing these events will help to reinforce memory about events and what they have learned. You can also encourage, where possible, individuals to bring along something they have completed, such as a picture they have painted, a book they have read, a jumper they have knitted, or they can share pictures of places they have visited, visitors they have had. The group can be made into a natural social gathering with a break for tea and cakes which some of the members may have baked. Opportunities will also arise to mark special occasions such as birthdays or special trips.



# **WRITING**

ACTIVITIES USING WRITING FOR  
HEALTH AND WELLBEING

# MEMORY STIMULATION

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## **PURPOSE**

To use the senses to stimulate memories.

## **WHAT YOU'LL NEED**

Objects which are not necessarily easily identified by touch, such as a feather, a piece of material, sea shells, a candle, small ornaments, small wooden carvings, a piece of wallpaper, textured boxes, a bracelet, a furry toy animal, a framed photo, a notebook. (Avoid practical everyday things such as cups, saucers or pens which are easily identified and tend to be less effective in stimulating imagination. Also ensure the objects are fairly robust and won't fall apart when handled.) Pens and paper.

## **WHAT TO DO**

Ask individuals to sit with their hands in their laps and close their eyes. Explain that you'll be placing an object in their hands – nothing nasty, creepy or unpleasant. Tell them to feel, smell, shake or knock the object gently against something. They can use any of the senses to explore it – except sight. While they are doing this, ask the group questions:

- » What does your object feel like?
- » What colour do you think it is?
- » What might it be used for?
- » How old is it?
- » Is it natural or man-made?
- » Who might it belong to?
- » Does it remind you of something – a memory, a person, an event, an experience or an emotion?

Allow people to ponder on their objects for a few minutes and then tell them you are going to take them away. When you have done this, ask them to open their eyes and to start writing about any memories the objects have recalled. Allow a pre-set time. Ten minutes is usually sufficient.

When the time is up, invite each person, in turn, to read out what they have written and afterwards show everyone the object they held.

## **COMMENT**

If anyone feels uncomfortable about closing their eyes, say they can keep them open if they wish. You can also do this exercise omitting the writing. Instead, invite each person, in turn, to talk about any memories stimulated.

# WITH THESE HANDS

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## **PURPOSE**

To tell life stories using different parts of the body.

## **WHAT YOU'LL NEED**

Paper and pens.

## **WHAT TO DO**

Explain that we live in our bodies and experience the world through the different parts of them using the senses – sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. Ask participants to look at and examine their hands. How do they feel about them? How have they used them over the years? What sort of things have they done with them? Baked cakes, made jewellery, created a garden, played the piano, painted and decorated houses, assembled cars, played cards, stolen things, made sculptures, and so on. After some brief discussion to get people thinking, invite participants to focus on one aspect, incident or situation in which their hands have played a major role. They can write a poem or just tell a story about their hands. Here is the start of a short example:

*I love these hands; they have helped me earn my living all my life. They are short, stubby and quite ugly but always strong and dependable. Many times they have gotten me out of trouble. The first time was in 1953 after I got my first job. I was working on some high scaffolding when a lorry crashed into it knocking a platform away from under my feet. Luckily my hands grabbed a cross bar...*

When participants have finished writing, invite volunteers to read out their work

## **COMMENT**

You can also do this activity using other parts of the body such as feet, eyes, hair, shoulders, teeth, ears and nose. You may like to give participants a choice of which body part viewpoint they wish to write about. The activity can also be done verbally, giving participants time to think and then inviting them to relate their story.