

ELDER CARE ACTIVITIES

105 GREAT ACTIVITIES THAT YOU CAN DO AT HOME, IN ASSISTED LIVING, RETIREMENT COMMUNITY OR NURSING HOME



BENJAMIN PEARCE

SUMMARY

Stuck for ideas to get people motivated? Here is a list of 105 activity ideas for both high and low functioning people with links to templates to use for seniors at home or in senior living communities. Contains Therapeutic Target for each, website link to templates and videos, Purpose of each activity and detailed methods on how to carry it out. Not only are these activities fun for seniors, but will also appeal to You! Your life-enrichment or activity program should offer more than entertainment, it should be designed to improve cognition, build self esteem, exercise motor skills, stimulate intellectual growth, provide social contact, stimulate creative expression, and be fun and failure free. A therapeutic approach allows us to understand a person not only as someone who suffers from illness, but also as someone who inhabits healthy parts and personality that remains even though it seems to be hidden by illness. Senior(s) are like everyone else – they attach personal meanings to their activities. So when we engage in meaningful activities, then activity becomes therapy.

This therapeutic, multi-faceted interdisciplinary approach to activities, social and leisure programming provides specialized stimulation to create structure and support in meeting the physical, psychosocial, cognitive and spiritual needs of each senior(s).

Activities are arranged by *High Functioning* and *Low Functioning*. This book comes with live links to templates for crafts, paintable pictures, puzzles, games, reminiscence exercises, door hangers, exercise video, website resources, finish the phrase remote memory exercises and much more that you can download right to your mobile device or computer! The programs can best be displayed if you connect your computer to your TV (ask an electronics store for the correct cable) or for one-on-one, use a tablet device such as an iPad.

• Benjamin W Pearce •

About the Author

Benjamin Pearce is an expert in the senior living industry and senior care. He has three decades of experience working with 206 communities in 33 states encompassing over \$854 million in annual revenue. Pearce has extensive experience as a published author of several books and as a public speaker for caregivers and supervisors. His book, Senior Living Communities: Operations management and marketing for assisted living, congregate and continuing care retirement communities was first published in 1998, and a second edition in 2007 by John Hopkins University Press is now the go-to handbook for effective senior residential facilities. It has also been converted into an online classroom for the certification of assisted living administrators in several states. He has also written many articles on senior living for publications such as Provider, Contemporary Long Term Care and Assisted Living Success. Pearce also serves as an expert witness for assisted living and skilled nursing litigation.

In addition, Pearce shares his expertise as an adjunct professor for Johns Hopkins University and New York University, while teaching a variety of courses about the elderly, dementia and customer service for continuing education online that is approved in all fifty states.

Currently Divisional Vice President of Operations - East for Holiday Retirement, he oversees all Holiday Communities on the East Coast. Formerly President of Senior Living Management, Mr. Pearce provided management and consulting services for the senior living industry including skilled nursing, assisted living, memory care, independent living and active adult retirement communities. Prior he was Senior Vice President, Senior Housing of Genesis Health Ventures Inc., Mr. Pearce was responsible for the planning, implementing, and directing all facets of operations and marketing. Prior to that, he served as Senior Vice President of Operations for A•D•S Senior Housing, which was acquired by Genesis Health Ventures in October of 1997. Prior to that he was Vice President of Operations for Classic Residence by Hyatt, during his tenure there he was able to triple the number of move-ins per month while cutting the average cost per move-in in half.

Pearce has received a number of awards including the Contemporary Long Term Care Order of Excellence in 1990, 1991 and 1994. The Contemporary Long Term Care Order of Excellence is awarded to recognize outstanding operators and is an elite fraternity whose members have been judged by their peers to be the nation's best. Nominees are judged in three categories: resident services, business management, and facility design. Within these categories facilities are evaluated on quality, innovation, and cost effectiveness.

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HIGH FUNCTIONING



Old age is a time in life when we may perceive the physical world as continually shrinking. Seniors tend to focus on their limitations and the obstacles that aging presents leaving them vulnerable to depression. If left unchecked, this depression can inhibit activity and recovery from illness leading to hopelessness and premature death. By participating in activities we are less likely to experience the debilitating symptoms of depression. People who remain active are usually healthier and happier.

• Chapter 1 •

Enrichment

1. Wheel of Fortune

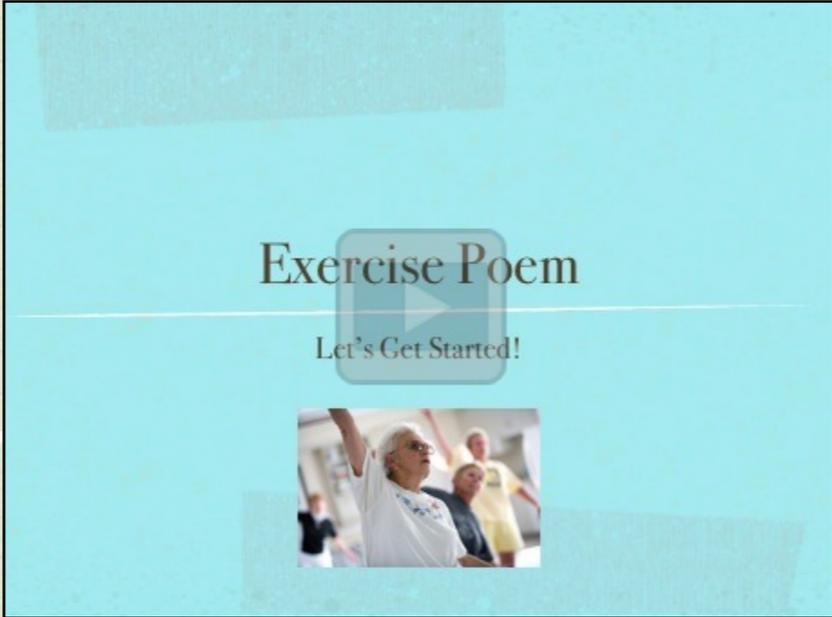
Therapeutic Target: Long Term Memories, Cognitive

Wheel of Fortune

Purpose: Senior(s) are very familiar with this popular TV game show. Engage Senior(s) socially, and build self-confidence.

Method: Position Senior(s) in front of a flip chart or white board. Mark the number of letters in each word across the paper. Have them guess one letter at a time until they guess the word or words in the puzzle. Then using the letters in the puzzle try to make as many different words as possible with different combinations of the letters. This will use one complete flip chart sheet for each word. There are several seasonal words in the attached file for each month. Praise Senior(s) for correct responses.

Exercise Poem
Tap Center to Advance



Exercise is the Best Medicine. Getting the heart beating early in the morning cleans out the sleepy cob webs and gets you off on the right foot. These can be done seated or standing.

2. Exercise Poem

Therapeutic Target: Exercise, fall reduction

Exercise Video

This link above will open a YouTube movie version which will auto advance.

Purpose: Exercise is the best medicine. Senior(s) who start their day with light exercise prevent blood pooling in their extremities, which could lead to orthostatic hypertension which can lead to falls. Getting the heart beating early in the morning cleans out the sleepy cob webs and gets them off on the right foot.

Method: Click the Exercise Poem Interactive e and lead them in the exercise movements. Celebrate your fresh mind and body when its over by giving yourselves a big hug and around of applause!!

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive

[Daily Meditations](#)

Purpose: Senior(s) need to stimulate parts of their brain with abstract thoughts. This helps them to reach the limbic area of the brain that separates fact from fiction, and stimulates their long-term memory.

Method: Position the Senior(s) in a group in the living room. Go to the Living Life Fully website above and select today's date. Either print out the page or read off the screen Today's quotation, and ask the Senior(s) what they may know about the author of the quote. Then read the meditation s l o w l y. Start a discussion using the questions offered and involve EVERY senior(s) to their own ability level. Senior(s) should not be challenged to do more than they can successfully. Finish the activity by reading the quote at the bottom, and ask them what it means to them.

6. Living Virtues

Therapeutic Target: Cognition

[Living Virtues](#)

Purpose: At the heart of our being exists a core set of virtues – gifts that represent the essence of the human spirit and the content of our character. These gifts are universal, not defined or limited by gender, nation, race or religion. They are inherent in the human experience. You have every

one of these gifts within you. Research shows that Senior(s) need to keep in touch with their spiritual self to live life fully. The purpose of this exercise is to provide empowering strategies that inspire the practice of virtues in everyday life through simplicity which support our Senior(s) to cultivate their virtues – the gifts of character.

Method: Position the Senior(s) in front of the screen, introduce the activity and click on the attached link. Start at the top of each column of 17 virtues, roll the cursor over each and read it and discuss it with the Senior(s). Only do one column per time. Ask the Senior(s) what they think about when they hear this word, and ask them if someone special comes to mind who they know who possesses this virtue.

7. Devotions - Our Daily Bread

Therapeutic Target: Spiritual, social, self esteem building

[Our Daily Bread](#)

Purpose: To offer non-denominational spiritual inspiration to the Senior(s).

Method: Position all Senior(s). Introduce activity, which is the weekly inspirational story.

Click on link above and turn up volume on Computer. Click the start arrow in the audio box at the top and let the Senior(s) listen to the message. At the end summarize for the Senior(s) the elements of the story and ask them how they feel about it. Has this ever happened to them? How does it make you feel?

8. Tea Talk

Therapeutic Target: Psychosocial, eye-hand coordination, snack

[Afternoon Tea](#)

Purpose: To have a fun social party time, hydrate Senior(s) and provide snack. Socialization. Choose a topic of interest in today's world news to discuss.

Method: Play the tea video to help senior(s) transition to this new activity.

Bring Senior(s) to the dining area and prepare warm (not hot) tea and serve it in a cup and saucer. Provide a snack cookie or sweet treat to go with the tea on a decorative disposable napkin. Engage the Senior(s) in a discussion about a current event or seasonal theme.

9. Coffee Klatch

Therapeutic Target: psychosocial, communication, eye hand coordination

[The Coffee Song](#)

Purpose: Social event designed to foster group dynamics and story sharing.

Method: Play the attached video first to help get Senior(s) thinking about coffee, mmmmm. Each senior(s) is asked to relate a funny story

about themselves, or how they met their wife, or describe their favorite pet, or their favorite card game.

10. Ice Cream Social

Therapeutic Target: Social, Reminiscence

[I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream](#)

Purpose: To connect Senior(s) together is a social activity that adds calories to their diet.

Method: Open attached YouTube video from 1925 and play the I scream you scream we all scream for ice cream video. Dish up one small bowl of ice cream, frozen yogurt or sugar free (diabetic Senior(s)) substitute for each senior(s). Encourage them to participate decorating their own dish with sprinkles, carmel or chocolate syrup and whipped cream, where appropriate. All Senior(s) should be encouraged to participate to their own ability.

11. At Breakfast, Lunch or Dinner

Therapeutic Target: Social, nutrition

[Always Watching Over You](#)

Purpose: To assist Senior(s) in eating all food served to them. In order to maintain nutrition and strength, The music and artistry of composer Paul Collier is deeply moving. His music is designed to relax and soothe. You can incorporate a different music video each day at

dinnertime for the Senior(s) to enjoy while eating their meals. All of his music is instrumental and uses alpha binaural tones. Binaural beats or binaural tones are auditory processing artifacts, or apparent sounds, the perception of which arises in the brain for specific physical stimuli. This effect was discovered in 1839 by Heinrich Wilhelm Dove, and earned greater public awareness in the late 20th century based on claims that binaural beats could help induce relaxation, meditation, creativity and other desirable mental states. Binaural beats reportedly influence the brain in more subtle ways through the entrainment of brainwaves and have been claimed to reduce anxiety and provide other health benefits such as control over pain.

Method: Click on the link to start the video after everyone is seated. Assist other caregivers in serving the Senior(s) and sit with them to encourage them to eat their meal.

12. Tarzan Trivia

Therapeutic Target: Remote memory, cognition, socialization.

[Tarzan](#)

Purpose: Provides a trivia puzzle to access people's remote memory

Method: Print out the attached handout. Gather Senior(s) together and read through the questions. Encourage them to shout out the answers, and praise participation.

13. Arm Chair Historian

Therapeutic Target: Cognition, Long Term Memory, Short Term Memory

[History](#)

Purpose: Expose Senior(s) to history and new discoveries around the globe, trigger remote memory, cognition, relax after exercise.

Method: Position Senior(s) in front of TV OR COMPUTER. Introduce video, ask Senior(s) if they have any memories about the subject. Click the link to start the video, mute volume during introductory commercial if any. After video ask Senior(s) what they liked about it, this exercises short term memory.

14. Arm Chair Under the Sea

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive, Long-Term Memory

[Under the Sea](#)

Purpose: Expose Senior(s) to adventures under the sea, trigger remote memory, cognition, relax after exercise.

Method: Position Senior(s) in front of TV OR COMPUTER. Introduce video, ask Senior(s) if they have any memories about the subject. Click the link to start the video, mute volume during introductory commercial if any. After video ask Senior(s) what they liked about it, this exercises short term memory.

15. Arm Chair Woodworker

Therapeutic Target: Cognition, Long Term Memory, Short Term Memory

[Woodworker's Shop](#)

Purpose: Expose Senior(s) to sports around the globe, trigger remote memory, cognition, relax after exercise.

Method: Position Senior(s) in front of TV OR COMPUTER. Introduce video, ask Senior(s) if they have any memories about the subject. Click the link to start the video, mute volume during introductory commercial if any. After video ask Senior(s) what they liked about it, this exercises short term memory.

16. Arm Chair Chef

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive, Long Term Memory, Short Term Memory

[What's Cookin?](#)

Purpose: Relax after exercise, access remote memories, learn new things, continental and ethnic food.

Method: Position Senior(s) in front of TV OR COMPUTER, introduce video, ask them if they liked the type of food featured, and what they remember about cooking or eating it. Click link to play video, mute volume during introductory commercial. After video ask Senior(s) what they liked about it, this exercises short term memory.

17. Arm Chair Naturalist

Therapeutic Target: Long Term Memories, Cognitive

[Nature](#)

Purpose: Relax after exercise and expose Senior(s) to nature and trigger remote memories.

Method: Position Senior(s) in front of TV OR COMPUTER, introduce the video and ask anyone if they have ever been to this place. Start video by clicking link above. Mute audio during introductory commercial. After video ask Senior(s) what they liked about it, this exercises short term memory.

18. Not Eggsactly

Therapeutic Target: Cognition, short term Memory, word search

Purpose: manual dexterity exercise, access remote memories, word find,

Method: Create the game by writing these words on plastic

eggs, split the word in the middle where the egg comes apart. Sugar on one side and plum on the other. Take apart the compound eggs have the participants create the compound words. You can either time each person or who get the most eggs correct.

Word Examples:

Sugarplum, Gingerbread, Snowman, Gumdrops, Poppycock, Snowflakes, Yuletide, Reindeer, Snowstorm, Overcoat, Fireplace, Frostbite, Iceberg, Earmuffs, Fruitcake, Peppermint, Mistletoe, Fairytale, Goodwill, Workshop, Eggnog, Wintertime, Evergreen, Centerpiece, Snowball, Thanksgiving, Scarecrow, Leftovers, Springtime, Butterfly, Baseball, Sunshine, Tadpole, Raincoat, Rainbow, Carnation, Passover, Maypole, Sweetheart, Strawberries, Boyfriend, Girlfriend, Carnation, Courtship, Heartthrob, Lovesick, Fireworks, Firecracker, Hotdogs, Backyard, Sunflower, Buttercups, Flagpole, Watermelon, Birthday, Cupcake, Groundhog, Shamrock, Rainbow, Limerick, Riverdance

19. Picture Books for Low Functioning

Therapeutic Target: Cognition, fine motor skills, build self esteem

[Picture the Possibilities](#)

Purpose: Higher functioning Senior(s) can create picture books for use in the lower functioning homes. Strengthens eye contact, motor skills, builds self confidence by helping others. Good visual stimulation and memory recall.

Method: Can be done on MAC or Windows computers. Picture books can be made on monthly theme - seasonal or holiday. Senior(s) will cut out attractive and interesting pictures and paste them onto blank three hole white notebook paper. Keep pictures in a three ring binder.

Manager will deliver finished picture book to lower functioning home for use in visual stimulation.

You can also use the iPhoto application to make your own photo book with pictures of your Senior(s), then print to the printer, don't click buy button.

20. Create a calendar

Therapeutic Target: Joint project with Manager and Senior(s)



[Calendar](#)

Purpose: Make your own facility calendar for the current year using photos of your Senior(s), and from your gallery on Mobile me.

Method: Download photos of your facility and/or Senior(s). Then open iPhoto and import them. Then Take a few photos of your manager, employees or senior(s) "calendar girls" with Photo booth and import them into iPhoto. Then take the tutorial in the link above.

Do not click buy calendar, simply go to file print to print your own. Have fun!!

21. Door Hangers

Therapeutic Target: Motor skills, eye hand coordination, self esteem building

Door Hanger

Purpose: To create a door decoration using craft art each month to decorate Senior(s) doors. Samples will be made first by caregiver to be used as an example, caregiver creations will be delivered to low functioning homes for senior(s) doors there who may be unable to create their own.

Method: Purchase some white or colored heavy stock paper (80 or 100 weight) at Staples that will go through your printer. Or use the foam door hangers (click link above) Open the attached template and print. Cut out template and decorate seasonally and print each Senior(s) first name. This will be used each month to help Senior(s) identify their room. We can also make a "Welcome Mary" one for Senior(s) who have reserved a room but have not moved in. This will make Senior(s) feel welcome and identify which vacant rooms are sold.

Materials: see attached web site for proper paper.

22. Door Hanger - Indian Corn

Therapeutic Target: Craft art, fine motor skills, confidence builder

Indian Corn Door Hanger

Purpose: To create a simple and colorful door hanger for a seasonal display. This is a very simple design but results in a beautiful end product. The instructions are in the attached link. Use heavy card stock

paper for the corn cob base, then glue the tissue paper balls onto it. Have the Senior(s) complete as much as possible, then hang them on each door. Caregiver can make additional ones for any vacant room doors.

23. What am I ? - Apron

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive, long term memory, social

Aprons

Purpose: To stimulate social interaction, build self-esteem, reminiscence, and have fun.

Method: Position the Senior(s) in front of the TV OR COMPUTER. Introduce the activity that we need to solve a puzzle and guess the hidden item (apron). Then read through the remainder of the

printed material and point out the photos. Try to ask what kind of apron they used, and what kind their mother used and why they were different. Also ask if they have seen the aprons that men wear, such as carpenters and the orange Home Depot aprons.



24. Turkey Trivia

Therapeutic Target: Reminiscence, educational, social and interactive

[Turkey Trivia](#)

Purpose: To engage Senior(s) in a group discussion and learn about what they will be eating for dinner - Turkeys!

Method: Position the Senior(s) in a semi circle in front of the TV OR COMPUTER. Read through the discussion starter questions. Ask the Senior(s) what they remember about each question and draw out their life-long experiences. This process will tap into their long-term memories and highlight their remaining abilities, which builds confidence.

25. Poetry Corner

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive stimulation

[Poetry Corner](#)

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for creative expression of emotions and feelings. To promote self-esteem and cognitive stimulation.

Method: Position the Senior(s) in front of the TV OR COMPUTER. Introduce the activity as Poetry Corner and that we will be reading several beautiful poems. Click the link above, then select this month. Open each of the poems and read aloud slowly. Ask the Senior(s) if they

liked it and what does it make them think of. Focus upon the message in each poem and ask the Senior(s) what it makes them remember.

26. Window on the World

Therapeutic Target: Current Events

[Window on the World](#)

Purpose: To keep Senior(s) informed regarding top stories in the news, to provide them a window on the world. This connects them to important events outside their Facility and helps maintain cognition.

Method: Position the Senior(s) in a group in front of the TV OR COMPUTER.

Introduce the activity and state purpose.

Click link above and read the summary paragraph for the top 10 news stories. Ask questions to the Senior(s) about their impressions and world views before going on to each new story.

27. Finish the Food Phrase

Therapeutic Target: Reminiscence, Long Term Memory, Social

[Finish the Food Phrase](#)

Purpose: Encourage Senior(s) to access their long-term memory and interact with caregiver and other Senior(s).

Method: Position Senior(s) in front of the TV OR COMPUTER.

Introduce the activity, double click on the attached file and make full screen slides will auto advance slowly. Read each slide and encourage Senior(s) to finish the phrase. After the slides are done, put up the flip chart and ask the Senior(s) what other phrases that may remember.

28. Animal Planet

Therapeutic Target: Long Term Memory, Cognitive, Social Interaction

[Animal Planet](#)

Purpose: Most Senior(s) have a love for animals. This series will exercise their long-term memory about animals.

Method: Position the Senior(s) in front of the TV OR COMPUTER.

Introduce the topic, click the link above to cue the subject matter. After the first video, open the attached file and do all the exercises with the Senior(s). Ask them what they know about EACH animal listed. Do the Hibernate word exercise on the white board or a flip chart.

29. Trivia Time

Therapeutic Target: Cognition, Long Term Memory

[Trivia Time](#)

Purpose: To get Senior(s) to access their remote Long Term Memory and have fun.

Method: Position Senior(s) in a circle and engage each one with

trivia questions on the attached file. Ask them what they may remember about each person, place or thing. On the monthly birthday puzzle, some may be unable to search for the words, so name each person and ask the Senior(s) what they may remember about these famous people.



30. It's Puzzling

Therapeutic Target: Cognition, Long Term Memory



[Its](#)

[Puzzling](#)

Purpose: To reach Senior(s) Long Term Memory about things and events that relate to the current month.

Method: Arrange Senior(s) in a circle, review each of the work sheets in the attached files, try to pull discussion out of them on each topic, for example, What is the birthstone for the current month? Who has a birthday in the current month, who has children/grandchildren with a birthday this month? What is the weather like normally this month, and what do we wear when we go outside. Are there any holidays this

month?

31. Brush to Canvas

Therapeutic Target: Art Craft, eye-hand coordination, fine motor skills

[Brush to Canvas](#)

Purpose: To exercise Senior(s)' creativity, fine motor skills and build self-esteem. Completed quality pictures can be mailed to family members each month. There are 4 for every month (two easy 2 hard).

32. Monthly IQ

Therapeutic Target: Reminiscence, cognition, social

[Monthly IQ](#)

Purpose: To get the Senior(s) to participate in a group activity and build self esteem by using long term recall.

Method: Position the Senior(s), Print out the attached handout and do questions and answers to the group. Praise correct and almost correct answers. The idea is to build confidence by showing the Senior(s) what they DO remember.

33. Table Top Games - Music Bingo

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive, Long Term Memory, eye-hand coordination

[Music Bingo](#)

[Music Bingo 1 songs](#)

Purpose: Music is a very therapeutic tool with the elderly. It promotes reminiscence and brings back familiar memories.

Method: Clear table and sanitize tops. Give each senior(s) one, and help them cover the free space. Rotate between tables to help Senior(s) find the proper numbers. Activity goes on after someone gets bingo until all cards are filled, winner fills entire card first or after 60 minutes.

Multiple games may be done. Winner receives snack award.

34. Table Top Games - JINGO

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive, Short Term Memory, eye-hand coordination

[Jingo](#)

Purpose: To give Senior(s) a quiet activity and exercise their fine motor skills and Memory.

Supplies: Print out the attached file.

Method: Clear table and sanitize tops. Set-up JINGO - Give each player one JINGO Playing card. Each player should also receive some markers to cover their square as their box is called (use colored paper, dried beans, or plastic disks). Read out the clue cards (its not necessary to cut them out) and help each player to check their card to see if they have the

appropriate selection. Rotate between tables to help Senior(s) find the proper clues. Activity goes on after someone gets bingo until all cards are filled, winner fills entire card first or after 60 minutes. Multiple games may be done. Winner receives snack award.

35. Table Top Games - Bingo

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive, Short Term Memory, eye-hand coordination

[And Bingo was his Name O](#)

Purpose: To give Senior(s) a quiet activity after their meal and exercise their fine motor skills.

Method: Clear table of all dinner dishes and silverware and sanitize tops. Set-up bingo and ask a high functioning senior(s) to call the numbers, if possible. Rotate between tables to help Senior(s) find the proper numbers. Activity goes on after someone gets bingo until all cards are filled, winner fills entire card first or after 60 minutes.

Multiple games may be done. Winner receives snack award.

36. Table Top Games - Puzzled

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive, Eye-hand coordination, motor skills

Purpose: To give Senior(s) a quiet activity and exercise their fine motor skills.

Method: Clear table and sanitize tops. Set-up three separate picture puzzles and locate corner pieces, add one piece to each corner piece to get them started. Rotate between tables to help Senior(s) find the proper pieces. Activity is over when all three puzzles are assembled or after 60 minutes. Multiple puzzles may be used.

37. TV Classics

Therapeutic Target: cognition, strengthens senior(s)'s attention span, Long Term Memory

TV Classics

Purpose: Previous research points at TV OR COMPUTER viewing as an important routine in everyday life and as an active occupation as opposed to assumptions about TV OR COMPUTER viewing being passive. Studies confirm these results and shows that television viewing contributes to keep up with routines in an unproblematic way. TV OR COMPUTER viewing has a role in generating communication and shared experiences from what persons jointly watch. This communication is recommended to be developed as a part of the caring strategy. Program content can also be developed to better fit the needs and demands of old viewers with dementia.

Method: Position Senior(s) in front of the TV OR COMPUTER, Introduce the classic show and ask Senior(s) if they remember watching "Leave it to Beaver" or whatever is to be played. Mute volume during introductory commercial. Discuss the episode afterwards.

38. Mobiles - for Low Functioning Senior(s)

Therapeutic Target: Motor skills, reminiscence

Example of Mobile Assembly

Purchase Supplies

Purpose: Build a mobile to hang in the room of a low functioning senior(s).

Method: Print out the attached diagram of the finished sample. Cut out attractive and interesting photos from magazines and catalogs and paste them double sided to heavy construction paper. Construct mobile by attaching yarn to a paper clip and then to two dowel pieces in the shape of a cross. The center piece should say "Handmade by the Senior(s) of 'Your Home' and will not be changed each month. New pictures can be made every month to reflect the season or monthly holiday. You can deliver the pictures to the low functioning homes and the caregiver there and swap them out each month. The old pictures can be stored in a large envelope and used for cueing low functioning Senior(s).

Goal: To provide visual stimulation to low functioning Senior(s) and help decorate their rooms. Strengthens ability to focus and hold eye contact. Builds self-esteem of high functioning Senior(s) by giving them a project with a purpose.

39. The Good Ole Days

Therapeutic Target: cognition, strengthens senior(s)'s attention span, Long Term Memory

[Reminiscing](#)

Purpose: To exercise senior(s)'s long-term memory, trigger remote memories, interact with other Senior(s) and have fun.

Method: Position the Senior(s) in front of the TV OR COMPUTER and tell them that we are about to visit the Good Ole Days when life was simpler and when you were all children.

Click to open the attached file, and browse the table of contents, read aloud each subject and ask them which ones they would like to hear about. Read each story and follow the discussion questions.

40. Poem Hunter

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive stimulation

[Poem Hunter](#)

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for creative expression of emotions and feelings. To promote self-esteem and cognitive stimulation.

Method: Position the Senior(s) in front of the TV OR COMPUTER. Introduce the activity as Poetry Corner and that we will be reading several beautiful poems. Click the link above, then select this month. Open each of the poems and read aloud slowly. Ask the Senior(s) if they liked it and what does it make them think of. Focus upon the message in each poem and ask the Senior(s) what it makes them remember.

41. Food Collage for Low Functioning Senior(s)

Therapeutic Target: Motor skills, creativity, memory recall, self esteem

Purpose: Senior(s) will create food flash plates of common foods on this month's menu to be used for cueing low functioning Senior(s).

Method: Use a white paper plate and make a collage of food on the menu. Senior(s) will locate and cut out photos of foods on our monthly menu and past the picture onto the paper plate, then with a marker write the simple name of the food on the back. The completed plates will be delivered to the low functioning Senior(s) in your special care unit to be used for cuing. This will strengthen visual discrimination, strengthen ability to communicate to Senior(s) what they will be served to them and increase awareness.

42. Ordinary and Orderly

Therapeutic Target: Motor skills, creativity, memory recall, self esteem

Purpose: To be actively engaged in familiar life-long tasks central to everyday living that facilitate memories to be revisited.

Method: Assess the selected activity below that suits the senior(s)'s abilities, attention span and interest. Modify, simplify, and assess for safety as appropriate. Approach the senior(s) by saying, "This is a real mess, can you help me sort this out?"

- Folding wash, baby clothes, ribbons, scarves, napkins
- sweeping, dusting, doing dishes.

- Hanging up clothing, placing costume jewelry into sectioned boxes
- matching lids with plastic containers
- winding yarn or sanding wood
- sorting very large nuts(too big to swallow) and bolts
- putting playing cards in order by suit

Always thank the senior(s) for helping, offer praise and validate their importance to you.

43. Folding and Beholding

Therapeutic Target: Motor skills, creativity, memory recall, self esteem

Location: Napkin Folding Art

[Napkin Folding Guide](#)

Purpose: A fun activity for both caregiver and Senior(s) to create several different napkin folding art. Builds self esteem and manual dexterity.

Method: You will need to purchase a dozen heavy cloth cotton napkins. Go to the link provided and select an easy napkin fold first and master that, then go on to others. Make a sample first then help the Senior(s) to copy it. This will not work as well with paper napkins. Activities that can engage BOTH caregiver and Senior(s) are a home run!!

44. Music Group - Create a Song

Therapeutic Target: Group cooperation, cognitive, esteem building

[Sing-a-Long](#)

[Sing-a-long songs 1](#)

Purpose: People with need opportunities to be creative. This activity used lyric substitution to assist Senior(s) in writing their own song.

Method: Prepare a flip chart and markers. Tell the group to think about their favorite foods. What is your favorite meal? What is your favorite dessert? What is your favorite fruit or vegetable? What is your favorite ethnic food?

You will need eleven items in all. Start by singing "Yes we have no Bananas," inserting the foods that the group came up with. For example, Yes we have no chicken, we have no biscuits today! But we have herring, and Cole Slaw, and ice cream, and pickles, and all kinds of rolls, but yes we have no mashed potatoes, we have no hamburgers today!

Once the song is completed, post it in a public place so families and guests can see it. This process works well with "These are a few of my favorite things."

You can also do a sing-a-long with the attached song book.

45. Happy Hands

Therapeutic Target: Long term memory, validation

Purpose: To create a tactile and visible symbol connecting a senior(s)'s love and work for others, reflecting the past and validating the present.

Method: Talk with each senior(s) about their hands, feel their strength, acknowledge their shape, lines and skin texture. Have them place their hand on a piece of colored construction paper and trace it, help them to cut out the shape. Write something meaningful in their life that they have done on the hand cut-out. "Raised 4 children", "Held 12 grandchildren", "sailed a boat", "Ran a company", "Ran a race", etc .and their first name. On a separate poster board Write at the top "These hands have...". Then tape each of the hand cut-outs to the poster board and display in the dining room. Reminisce with the senior(s) about their hands and what they have done with them in their life. At home you can do one hand for each member of your family - where they live and what they do.



46. Lie to me - Meaningful Movements, Body Talk

Therapeutic Target: non-verbal communication, self expression

Body Language

Purpose: Each person has expressions that are similar, and convey different emotions.

Method: Introduce the topic by talking about body language. Define it for them if needed. Tell the Senior(s) that you are going to communicate non-verbally with your face and body and ask them to guess your mood. Use Happy (smiling and joyful) Sad (mouth turned down and sorrowful) Afraid, amorous, hurt, and yes confused! Have fun with it and ask the Senior(s) to show you how they look for each of these emotions. Go to the attached website and describe and act out the non-verbal behavior and then ask the Senior(s) to guess the mood.

47. Groundhog Prediction

Therapeutic Target: This easy game asks players to predict what will happen on Groundhog Day. Even though the real prediction is known only to Phil, players will have fun trying to outwit

Punxsutawney's famous weather prognosticator.

Method: Each player should have two cards - one depicting a spring scene and one depicting a snowy scene. Print the cards we have prepared for you in the attached file. Print as many copies as you need. If you want, glue the cards back-to-back on the end of a ruler, paint stirrer, or large craft stick.

To play the game:

Write "spring" on three slips of paper and "snow" on three slips of paper and put them in a bag.

Ask the players to make their predictions by holding up the appropriate card - either "snow" or "spring."

Draw one slip of paper from the bag.

Those players whose cards do not match what is written on the slip of paper drawn from the bag are out.

The game continues in this fashion until only one player is left.

The winner gets a snow globe or a bouquet of spring flowers.

48. Good Scents - Name that smell

Therapeutic Target: sensory stimulation, remote memory

Purpose: To stimulate senior(s)'s sense of smell, encourage socialization and discussion.

Method: Collect a variety of spices and aromatherapy oils and candles. These can be Lavender, clove, cinnamon, oregano, nutmeg, cumin, basil, mint. You can use dried herbs from the kitchen or fresh ones grown outside. Put each one in a separate cheesecloth and tie the top, or secure with a rubber band or use a pill cup. Each person is to sniff each bundle (be careful they don't try to eat it) Ask them to identify the smell, if they can not ask them if they like it, or not, what it reminds them of, and what it smells like. Use the exercise to open discussions about remote memories, cooking and baking. This exercise is most interesting with non-verbal Senior(s), because even though they may no longer speak, their facial expressions will tell you whether or not they still smell.

49. Finish the Fashion Phrase

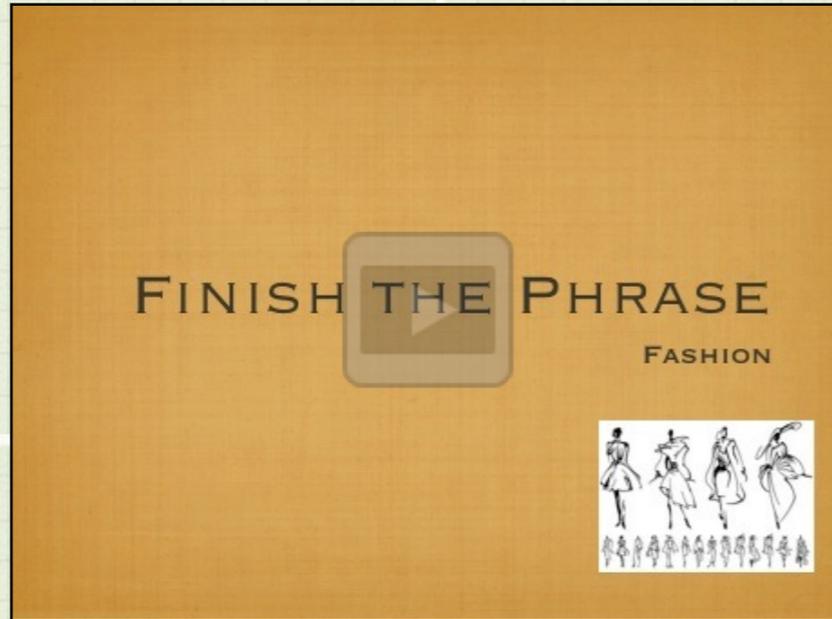
Therapeutic Target: Reminiscence, Long Term Memory, Social

[Finish the Fashion Phrase](#)

Purpose: Encourage Senior(s) to access their long-term memory and interact with caregiver and other Senior(s).

Method: Position Senior(s) in front of the TV OR COMPUTER. Introduce the activity, double click on the attached file and make full screen, the slides will auto advance slowly. Read each slide and encourage Senior(s) to finish the phrase. After the movie, put up the flip chart and ask the Senior(s) what other phrases that may remember.

Finish the Fashion Phrase
Tap Center to Advance



Read each slide and prompt to finish the phrase.

50. Animal Planet - Dogs are Man's best friend

Therapeutic Target: Long Term Memory, Cognitive, Social Interaction

[Dog Trivia](#)

[Dog Days](#)

Purpose: Most Senior(s) have a love for animals. This series will exercise their long-term memory about animals.

Method: Position the Senior(s) in front of the TV OR COMPUTER.
Introduce the topic, click the link above to cue the subject matter. Ask them what they know about EACH dog listed.

52. Animal Planet – It's a Bear's Life

Therapeutic Target: Long Term Memory, Cognitive, Social Interaction

[Its a Bear's Life](#)

Purpose: Most Senior(s) have a love for animals. This series will exercise their long-term memory about animals.

Method: Position the Senior(s) in front of the TV OR COMPUTER.
Introduce the topic, click the link above to cue the subject matter.
Simply read through the exercise with them. Ask if anyone has ever seen a real bear.

53. Chair Dancing

Therapeutic Target: Exercise, social, balance

[Jumpin Jive](#)

Purpose: To promote physical movement and exercise, improve and strengthen eye-hand coordination and balance. Productive and constructive release of nervous energy, social enjoyment.

Method: Arrange Senior(s) in a large circle, allow Senior(s) to use props (scarfs, flags, flowers, instruments, wash cloths, or anything soft). Lead Senior(s) in movement to the music. Alternate between slow and fast, watch Senior(s) for signs of fatigue. Don't attempt to plan out their movements, let them express themselves and you provide the energy and enthusiasm.

54. Beach Ball Games

Therapeutic Target: Exercise, coordination, motor skills

Kokomo

Purpose: Excellent activity for exercising arms and legs. Encourages Senior(s) to interact with each other. Elicits enthusiastic responses and amazing reflex actions. Good for building eye-hand coordination.

Method: Construct a newspaper bat by rolling up several newspapers for strength then taping the seams together. Leader goes around the circle and plays catch with each senior(s) throwing the ball back and forth gently. Be sure to get the Senior(s) attention before tossing the ball to them by calling each one by name. Then next time the leader gives the newspaper bat to each senior(s) and has them hit the beach ball,

another caregiver can assist the senior(s) with swinging the bat. Finally place the ball on the floor and sit the Senior(s) in a circle and have them kick the ball to another senior(s). Leader calls out each Senior(s) name that the ball is to be kicked to. Another variation is to blow up a rubber glove and draw the manager's face on it with a marker and hit it upward to keep it in the air as long as possible.

55. Parachute

Therapeutic Target: Social, exercise

Up Up and Away

Purpose: To encourage group coordination, motor skills, stimulate socialization.

Method: Play the Up Up and Away Video and sing along with the words. This video will inspire Senior(s) to participate in the activity. Senior(s) seated or standing in a circle. Each person holds the edge of the parachute with both hands.

Parachute is moved up and down slowly then vigorously. For variety a ball may be placed in the parachute or a balloon, the object is to keep the ball from falling to the floor. Another variation is to have the Senior(s) kick the ball from underneath, holding the parachute level with their hands then kicking up from the bottom.



56. Plate Dancing

Therapeutic Target: exercise, craft art, coordination

[The Stroll](#)

Purpose: Senior(s) craft art and fine motor skills, exercise, social.

Methods: Seat all the Senior(s) at an activity table. Give each of them a heavy-duty white paper plate. Give each senior(s) a magazine and help them to select a photo of someone in the magazine that looks like them or that they would like to look like. Help them to cut out that picture and glue it to the center of the paper plate. Give them some markers to decorate the plate, then punch a series of holes all around the lip of the plate. Help the Senior(s) to tie a length of ribbon to each hole approximately 6 inches long, this gives the plate some "life" when it is moved around. Then Position the Senior(s) in a large circle and lead them in holding the plate over their head, to each side, in front, etc. do this to music.

57. Bowling with Cajoling

Therapeutic Target: Exercise, social, coordination, balance

[Bowling Bowling Bowling](#)

[How to Keep Score in Bowling](#)

Purpose: Exercise, builds coordination and balance, strengthening. Social, and very good self esteem booster!

Method: Arrange Senior(s) at to opposite sides of the room approximately 15-20 feet apart. Set up 10 plastic bowling pins or plastic glasses, arranged in rows 1-2-3-4. Have the senior(s) knock down as many pins as they can in two throws with a beach ball or bowling ball. Then reverse direction for the Senior(s) on the other side of the room. This way everyone get to see what's happening.

58. Academy Award Match

Therapeutic Target: Cognition, Long Term Memory

[Academy Award Match](#)

Purpose: To reach Senior(s) Long Term Memory about things and events that relate to the current month.

Method: Arrange Senior(s) in a circle, review each of the work sheets in the attached files, try to pull discussion out of them on each topic, for example, What is the birthstone for the current month? Who has a birthday in the current month, who has children/grandchildren with a birthday this month? What it the weather like normally this month, and what do we wear when we go outside. Are there any holidays this month?

59. American Adventure

Therapeutic Target: Long term memory, social interaction

[American Adventure](#)

Purpose: American Adventure is a trivia game using famous landmarks across the United States.

Method: Position the Senior(s), display each card and ask them to identify the landmark. Encourage discussion. "Has anyone ever visited this place?" "What do you remember about it?" Read through the questions and answers, and try to stimulate a discussion on each. Read the Notable notes which provide interesting facts.

60. Holiday Trivia

Therapeutic Target: Long term memory, social interaction

[Holiday Trivia](#)

Purpose: Holiday Trivia can be used to stimulate mind and memory, to entertain, and to encourage discussion of past events. It can add a creative touch to special occasions or to introduce parties.

Method: Open the attached file. The activity is divided into 20 different holidays and special occasions. Read aloud each question to the Senior(s), and prompt them for a response. At the end of each section there are a few questions under the title "Remembering" Use this section to stimulate discussion and encourage reminiscing.

61. Door Hanger Art

Therapeutic Target: Motor Skills, eye hand coordination, self esteem builder

[Door Hanger Art](#)

[Door Hanger Templates](#)

Purpose: To create a door decoration using craft art and each month to decorate Senior(s) doors. Samples will be made first by caregiver to be used as an example, caregiver creations will be made using names from low functioning Senior(s) and delivered to homes for senior(s) doors there who may be unable to create their own. There is a template for every month.

62. Patriotic Door Hanger

Therapeutic Target: Motor Skills, eye hand coordination, self esteem building

[Patriotic Door Hanger](#)

Click on the image and open the pdf file.

Type a special message on the back of the cards if you want. If you are planning a special event, type in the specifics - date, time, location, and other information. If you prefer, erase the text and leave blank or handwrite a message.

Print on card stock or regular paper. (Regular paper works pretty well since it is folded for double thickness.)

Cut out along the outside lines.

Fold along the center line. If you're using card stock, trace down the center line with a dull knife to make a crisp fold.

Cut along the angled dotted line in the upper corner and continue to cut around the circle. (Both holes will be cut at once, which will make them



line up perfectly.)

Glue the two sides together using a glue stick.

Hang the card on the doorknob of someone special.

63. Food Finish Lines

Therapeutic Target: Reminiscence, Long Term Memory, Social

[Food Finish Lines](#)

Purpose: Encourage Senior(s) to access their long-term memory and interact with caregiver and other Senior(s). Great pre-meal activity!

Method: Position Senior(s) in front of the TV OR COMPUTER. Introduce the activity, double click on the attached file. Read each clue and encourage Senior(s) to finish the phrase. After the list is done, put up the flip chart and ask the Senior(s) what other phrases that may remember.

64. Relaxation Resort

Therapeutic Target: Dissimulating nature videos

[Relaxation Resort](#)

Purpose: Senior(s) need to be processed into each activity. Research shows a strong connection between the elderly and nature. This series of nature videos are designed to relax the Senior(s) and get them ready for bed. Method: After Senior(s) have finished their evening snack, click the attached link to these scenic nature videos and make it cover the full screen. These videos will play for approximately 10 minutes each. You can select a different video each night.

65. Rhythm Band Instruments

Therapeutic Target: Eye Hand coordination, cognition, motor control

Purpose: Increase self-esteem; provide socialization with family members; maintain and improve fine motor coordination, sensory stimulation, and restorative skills; also a great way to include

participation of children and bring out the “inner child” in all who join in.

Materials:

Method: Drums. Almost any cylindrical cans or boxes can be used, such as empty paint cans and oatmeal boxes. Decorate as desired.

Drumsticks. Possibilities include small tree branches, wooden spoons, pencils, and chopsticks. Wad cloth or paper around the end of the stick to form a pad, and adhere it with a rubber band, string, or glue.

Tambourines. Use sturdy paper plates, paint can lids, or plastic lids. With a hole punch or hammer and nail, punch small holes around the edges. Flatten bottle caps with a hammer and punch a hole in the center with a hammer and nail. Next, tie a short string to one side of the bottle cap, and string through the holes in the paper plates, plastic lids, or paint can lids. Knot both ends securely. Decorate as desired.

Rhythm sticks. Use bamboo rods, wooden dowels, large knitting needles — any sticks that can be hit together.

Cymbals. If you have two old metal pot lids with knobs, you have a pair of cymbals.

Sand blocks. Two small pieces of wood with sandpaper attached to one side are all you need. Rub the sandpaper sides together.

Castanets. Fill coffee cans or baby food jars with small pebbles or dried beans. Secure lid. Shake.

66. Native American Rattle

Therapeutic Target: Eye Hand coordination, cognition, motor control

Purpose: Provide a sense of accomplishment; improve or maintain hand-eye coordination; provide relaxation. This is a great distraction activity, and when younger members of the family join in, it increases socialization skills.

Equipment: One Y-shaped twig; yarn; scissors; tape; feathers; beads; buttons or shells with holes in them

Method: Hold the twig in one hand (descending part of twig should be long enough to hold comfortably).

Begin by wrapping the yarn around one prong of the Y.

Secure yarn with a knot, or a piece of tape if the loved one does not have the dexterity to tie knots.

String beads, buttons, shells, or feathers along the way, and cover the yarn entirely. Knot or tape the end.

Start a new piece of yarn and tie to one end of the twig, stretching it across the Y-shape. String feathers, beads, and shells along the yarn and secure the yarn to the other prong of the Y.

When shaken, it will make a rattling sound.

67. Makin Maracas

Therapeutic Target: Motor control, eye hand coordination, craft art, socialization.

Mracas

Purpose: Provide a sense of accomplishment; increase or maintain hand-eye coordination; provide opportunity for increased socialization.

Method: A maraca is a Latin American and Tupi Indian rattle. The originals were made from hollow gourds filled with pebbles or seeds.

These maracas are simple renditions made from paper plates. They are fun to make and are a great addition to the rhythm band. They are easy to use and make a delightful sound.

Equipment: Two paper plates; colored markers or crayons; stapler; crepe paper streamers; dried beans, rice, or popcorn kernels

Description of Activity: Decorate paper plates with crayons or colored markers.

Staple long crepe paper streamers to the inside of the plate. Put a handful of dried beans, rice, or popcorn kernels in the paper plate.

Place a paper plate on top of the other paper plate and staple all the way around. You can also make maracas with just one paper plate by folding it in half and stapling it shut.

68. Rock People

Therapeutic Target: Craft art, Motor skills, creative, self-esteem building.

Purpose: Stimulate the imagination with an amusing and creative activity; maintain and improve hand-eye coordination and restorative skills Adaptation: Rocks can be made into various animal shapes as well as people. May be used as paperweights. Great project to do with kids and Senior(s).

Method: Equipment: Round, smooth rocks of various sizes; water-based paint; brushes; scraps of yarn and fabric glue;

Description of Activity Clean the rocks. Glue an assortment of rocks together to make figures of various sizes and shapes. You can use a mixture of hot glue and a dab of regular glue for added strength. First apply the hot glue and attach the rocks; then apply regular glue to where the rock attaches to the hot glue.

Paint and decorate the figures to look like people.

69. Bean Bag Basketball

Therapeutic Target: Coordination, exercise, eye-hand motion, self-esteem, socialization

Bean Bags

Purpose: Competition; increased activity; maintain and improve hand-eye coordination and communication Adaptation: The size of the bucket

and the position of from the shooter may be adjusted according to the abilities of the players.

Method: Equipment: plastic bucket, beanbags

Description of Activity:

Establish a throw line. The players on the two teams alternate tossing the beanbag.

The scoring is as follows: A goal on the first try earns 3 points; a goal on the second try earns 2 points; and a goal on the third try earns 1 point.

After all players have had a turn, (or after a set amount of time) the team with the most points wins.

70. Bean Bag Relay

Therapeutic Target: eye hand coordination, motor control, cooperation, socialization

Bean Bags

Purpose: Competition; team spirit and communication; family activity and exercise.

Method: Equipment: Eight beanbags; two buckets

Description of Activity: Set the buckets parallel to each other several feet from the starting line. Divide players into two equal-numbered teams.

With one player standing behind another on each team, (wheelchair Senior(s) can be lined up side by side) have the two teams line up side by side an equal distance from the buckets. Give the first player on each team a beanbag. At the signal to begin play, the first player on each team receives the bean bag. it is passed down the line to the last player and drops it into the bucket. This is repeated until all bean bags have been passed and dropped into the bucket. The team who passes all four bean bags down to the bucket is the winner.

71. Name That Tune

Therapeutic Target: Long term memory, socialization, self esteem builder

Sing-a-long

Purpose: Provide a relaxing time; increase socialization skills; provide avenue for reminiscence; increase or maintain memory capabilities.

Method: Music can be a great source of relaxation for many. It also inspires and brings back childhood and early adult memories.

Playing Name That Tune is an excellent way to introduce reminiscence activities. Music soothes and relaxes and allows the loved one and the person caring for them a time for bonding. Of course, everyone is encouraged to sing along.

Description of Activity: Open the songbook above and hum a few bars or ask a senior(s) who knows the song to hum or sign a few lines. Have the Senior(s) guess the song.

The first person to guess the name of the song gets awarded 1 point.

You can set a time limit of thirty minutes and the one who has the most points wins, or set a score amount such as 10 points and the first one to get the points is the winner.

72. Music and a Story

Therapeutic Target: Long term memory reminiscence, story telling, socialization, getting to know each other.

[Sing-a-Long](#)

Purpose: Provide increased socialization; maintain memory capabilities; provide reminiscence, relaxation, and opportunity for bonding.

Method: Open the Eldersong song book attached. Sing the song they select to refresh their memory. Ask each senior(s) to pick out a few of his or her favorite songs. You can also get lists of oldies but goodies from your local music store and let the one you are caring for look at the list and circle his or her favorite songs.

For each song the person must share a memory associated with the song or tell what they like about the song. You and your loved one can take turns telling stories.



Set at least thirty minutes to an hour for some special times to share this music with your loved one.

73. Circus Trivia

Therapeutic Target: Long term memory reminiscence, story telling, socialization.

[Circus](#)

Purpose: Circus Trivia can be used to stimulate mind and memory, to entertain, and to encourage discussion of past events. It can add a creative touch to special occasions or to introduce parties.

Method: Open the attached file. Read aloud each question to the Senior(s), and prompt them for a response. Use this section to stimulate discussion and encourage reminiscing.

74. Memory Garden

Therapeutic Target: Reminiscence, self esteem, social, long term memory

[Memory Garden](#)

Purpose: Provides a little journey out to the garden. For most women, gardening was an important hobby, research shows that elderly people stay connected to nature throughout their entire life. These games will help them to access their long term memories and build self esteem.

Method: Gather Senior(s) around the TV OR COMPUTER, click the link above and maximize it on the screen. There are five games here, have fun and lead the Senior(s) down the garden path.

75. Moon and Stars

Therapeutic Target: Current events, Long term memory, reminiscence

This activity occurs on March 20 (equinox), June 21 (Solstice), Sept 23 (equinox), and Dec 22 (Solstice).

Location: Solstice today

[Moon and Stars](#)

Purpose: To get Senior(s) to access their remote Long Term Memory and have fun. An equinox occurs twice a year, when the tilt of the Earth's axis is inclined neither away from nor towards the Sun, the center of the Sun being in the same plane as the Earth's equator. The term equinox can also be used in a broader sense, meaning the date when such a passage happens. The name "equinox" is derived from the Latin *aequus* (equal) and *nox* (night), because around the equinox, the night and day have approximately equal length. The summer solstice occurs when the sun is

its furthest north and the winter solstice occurs when it is furthest south.

Method: Position Senior(s) in a circle and engage each one with the questions on the attached file. Follow the handout material and do the activities with the Senior(s).

76. Sudoku

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive, match, colors and shapes 1/4

Sudoku

Purpose: The purpose of this match game is for Senior(s) to recognize shapes and colors and align them in order. This promotes self-esteem, color and shape recognition.

Method: Open the attached link, it is a document file. Click the imbedded links to print out the sample, the shapes, and the blank work sheet. Cut out each square of the shapes, and make a complete set for each participant. Show the participant the sample sheet and ask them to align their shapes onto the blank template to match. Try different combinations.

77. Easter Activities



Therapeutic Target: Reminiscence, self esteem, social, long term memory

[Easter](#)

Purpose: Reminiscence and social exercise to tap into remote ecumenical memories. Method: Position Senior(s) in a circle and engage each one with the questions on the attached file. Follow the handout material and do the activities with the Senior(s).

78. Spin the Dreidel

Therapeutic Target: Games, reminiscence, religious

[Dreidel](#)

Purpose: Play a cultural game to have fun and exercise fine motor skills

Method: Position the Senior(s) around the dining room tables and follow the exercise. Ask the Senior(s) if they remember playing with the dreidel as a child. Encourage and reward participation.

79. Christmas Music - Caroling

Therapeutic Target: Long term memory, reminiscence, socialization

[Christmas Songbook](#)

Purpose: To get the Senior(s) into the holiday spirit.

Method: Gather the Senior(s) together and tell them that we are going caroling. Give each senior(s) a scarf or hat and position them in front of the TV or Computer so they can see the words. You can also print out the words and copy them for each senior(s) at a copy place. Be sure to copy front and back style. Happy Holidays!!

80. Twin Snowflakes

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive, long term memory

[Twin Snowflakes](#)

Purpose: To engage Senior(s) in a discussion group to encourage socialization and solicit participation.

Method. Either print or follow the attached link material as it is projected onto the screen Read the exercise slowly and solicit participation. Do not challenge Senior(s) who refuse to participate, as they need to reach a comfort level first.

81. What am I ?

Therapeutic Target: Cognitive, long term memory, social

[Dollar Bill](#)

[Frizbee](#)

Apron

Purpose: To stimulate social interaction, build self-esteem, reminiscence, and have fun.

Method: Position the Senior(s) in front of the TV OR COMPUTER. Introduce the activity that we need to solve a puzzle and guess the hidden item (dollar bill). Then read through the remainder of the printed material and point out the photos.

82. Gift Tags

Therapeutic Target: Craft art, fine motor skills, confidence builder

Gift Tags

Purpose: To create simple and colorful gift tags for the families or for sale in the community store. This is a very simple design but results in a beautiful end product. Use heavy card stock paper, or Avery 5377 white blank business card templates, Print them out using the template above. Then Position watercolor paints, or markers to decorate them. You can also use stickers. Let them dry, punch a hole in the corner of each and attach a ribbon. You can also make your own template in MS Word that says s "Handmade by the _____ Senior(s) of "Your Community" and print this on the reverse side of your labels before you decorate them. To do this go to MSWord Tools Labels Options (Avery 7377) Type in your message, then Check the box FULL PAGE OF THE SAME LABEL. Then feed your sheets so that they print on the reverse side.

LOW FUNCTIONING



The following activities are designed to stimulate lower functioning people. Its important to recognize that even though people may not seem to respond at times, they may be absorbing much of what occurs around them. By stimulating their sensory receptors we can often reach them through the fog.



Sensory Stimulation

LOW FUNCTIONING ACTIVITIES

83. Sensory Activities

Therapeutic Target: Sensory Stimulation for the Low Functioning

[Sensory Stimulation](#)

Purpose: To provide stimulation

Method: Review the attached exercises and try to get a reaction from the senior. Ask them questions about each activity and what they may remember. Don't get discouraged, as you may be surprised what is getting through to them even though they may not exhibit a physical response.

84. My Favorite Stuffed Animal

Therapeutic Target: tactile, memory, interactive

Purpose: To share favorite toys and stuffed animals with partner, group, learn about how people react to different stuffed creatures.

Method: Begin by talking about different types of stuffed toys, dolls, animals, shapes. Make a list of all the types of stuffed things the group

can think of on a flip chart or white board. Discuss similarities and differences. Allow the Senior(s) to "try-out" different types of stuffed toys.

85. Good Scents - Name that smell

Therapeutic Target: sensory stimulation, remote memory

Purpose: To stimulate senior(s)'s sense of smell, encourage socialization and discussion.

Method: Collect a variety of spices and aromatherapy oils and candles. These can be Lavender, clove, cinnamon, oregano, nutmeg, cumin, basil, mint. You can use dried herbs from the kitchen or fresh ones grown outside. Put each one in separate cheesecloth and tie the top, or secure with a rubber band. Each person is to sniff each bundle (be careful they don't try to eat it) Ask them to identify the smell, if they cannot ask them if they like it, or not, what it reminds them of, and what it smells like. Use the exercise to open discussions about remote memories, cooking and baking. This exercise is most interesting with non-verbal Senior(s), because even though they may no longer speak, their facial expressions will tell you whether or not they still smell.

86. Hello with Jell-O

Therapeutic Target: tactile, sensory stimulation

[Cookie Cutter Set](#)

[Rockin' the Alphabet](#)

Purpose: To provide a non-threatening, enjoyable activity and stimulate curiosity with something unusual to the touch. Make one aluminum sheet pan for each table.

Method: Make gelatin one day before this activity. Follow the "Jell-o Jiggler" recipe on the gelatin box.

Use a piece of construction paper and write the senior(s)'s name at the top. Use alphabet cookie cutters to spell out each name. Place the completed letters onto a paper plate.

Let the Senior(s) play with the completed letters and eat them if desired.

87. Time Capsule

Therapeutic Target: sensory stimulation, remote memory

Purpose: To provide an opportunity to discuss current events, personal history, and share thoughts and feelings with others in the future. Use an empty paper towel roller tube and seal one end.

Method: A time capsule is a collection of things at a place in time, that can be preserved for someone in the future. Ask the group "If people were going to find this time capsule and learn about us 50 years from now, what would we want them to know about us?" Make a list of things on the white board, Take pictures of the Senior(s) with Photo booth,

print them and write their names at the top. Collect pictures of things that are representative of today's technology or events in the newspaper, cut them out of magazines or catalogs and put them into the time capsule. Wrap the completed capsule with plastic wrap and store it somewhere in the home. One year from now open it up and share the contents with the Senior(s) who are living there then.

88. Bubble Painting

Therapeutic Target: Sensory Stimulation

Purpose: To provide sensory stimulation, and an opportunity for instant success.

Method: Put 10 tsp. of one color of liquid tempera paint, 1 tsp. dish washing soap, and 1 tsp. water in each bowl. Still the mixture and use a straw to blow gently. When bubbles rise above the rim of the bowl, gently touch the paper to the bubbles. Blow more bubbles and repeat. You can use wrapping paper, printer paper, or construction paper.

You can also let the paintings dry, then tear them into small pieces and paste several different colors onto a new sheet of paper.

89. Egg Shell Rainbow

Therapeutic Target: Sensory Stimulation

Purpose: To provide sensory stimulation, and tactile training.

Method: You will need to keep egg shells from breakfast, wash them thoroughly with soap and water let dry. Sort eggshells into 5 piles. Crush them inside a heavy plastic bag with a rolling pin. Dye them separate colors using Easter egg dyes or cake dyes. Spread them out on newspaper to dry for 15 minutes. First pencil out the bands of your rainbow onto a piece of white construction paper. Squeeze glue along each band one at a time and spread it evenly. Sprinkle ONE color into the glue and help the Senior(s) spread the bands of colored eggshell evenly, one color at a time inside each band that you have drawn on the paper. Wait a few minutes, tap gently to remove any loose shell material, then repeat until the rainbow colors are complete. Try to keep the Senior(s) from eating any of the colored eggshells.

90. Makin and Shakin Music

Therapeutic Target: Auditory Stimulation, exercise

Purpose: To engage the Senior(s) in a musical experience. Efforts are applied systematically, frequently, and with an enthusiastic and caring attitude. It is not the quality of the music presented, or the proficiency of the person presenting the music, that makes the most difference. It is the willingness to use sound in a variety of ways that can have a positive effect on the relationship with your senior(s).

Method: You will need to purchase several musical instruments at a department or music store. These should include: Tambourines, Maracas, egg Shakers, etc. Give one to each senior(s) and show them how to use it. Put on some happy music, such as Luau or party music.

Fifteen Ways to Make a Rhythm Connection:

1. Try having a conversation without using words by tapping on the drum.
2. See if the senior(s) can copy a simple beat.
3. Try beating out the rhythm of your names, and then repeat it to make a pattern.
4. Try suggestion 3 with favorite foods, short phrases, names, any topic of interest.
5. Scratch the surface of fingernails. a drum lightly with your 6. Imitate the sound of a heartbeat.
7. Tap fingers lightly to sound like raindrops.
8. Start softly and slowly, gradually building to a fast crescendo.
9. Play loudly and gradually fade out.
10. Combine suggestions 8 and 9.
11. Play the “boom boom clap” of “We Will Rock You” by Queen.
12. Try to hear different pitches in different parts of a drum.
13. Turn over a hand drum and use it to carry your other small percussion instruments.
14. Turn a rain-stick over gently.

15. Play rhythms you hear in the environment: the chugga-chugga motion of a train; the agitation of a washing machine; the ticking of a clock; the wind beating a flag or causing something to click steadily.

91. Scarf Dancing

Therapeutic Target: Tactile, Sensory Stimulation

Purpose; To stimulate Senior(s) reactions to movement, color, eye/hand coordination, and sequencing.

Method: You will need at least 12 brightly colored scarves or colored material. Select familiar music to the Senior(s). Music should have slow, and fast tempos. Move the brightly colored scarf in front of the senior(s) to the beat of the music. Some Senior(s) may be able to hold their own scarf. Those who cannot should be encouraged to feel the material and watch the way it moves to the music. The leader can choreograph movements to the music using a scarf. up/down, in/out, front/back, left/right, circles, waving the scarf above your head. Don't make movements too fast, slower movements are easier for Senior(s) to follow.

92. Sounds Like...

Therapeutic Target: Auditory Stimulation, memory

Purpose: To stimulate the sense of hearing and short-term memory.

Method: Simulate the following sounds out of view of the senior(s) and prompt them to guess what they are:

-Pouring water from a pitcher

-Ice cubes dropped into a glass



-rubbing wood against wood, or striking one piece of wood against another

-shaking a wind chime

-shaking a tambourine or Malachi

-hitting a spoon against water filled glass - try different levels of water

-balling up a piece of paper

- ripping a page from the newspaper

-jiggling coins together

-thumbing through a book

-striking a wooden match (be careful)

-zipping up a jacket

93. Tastes Like...

Therapeutic Target: Gustatory Stimulation, memory

Purpose: To stimulate senior(s)'s sense of taste, and taste awareness with their eyes closed.

Method: Position the following items and ask the senior(s) to close their eyes (or leave them open) and have them taste each item and try to identify it.

Honey, Syrup, Lemon, peanut butter, cinnamon, nutmeg, pickles, chocolate, vanilla, peppermint, orange, or make up your own. Don't use anything hot or spicy.

94. Feels Like...

Therapeutic Target: Tactile Stimulation, memory

Purpose: The fingers are filled with receptors that are stimulated by shapes and textures. You can use tactile stimulation to arouse as well as to quiet.

Method: To stimulate senior(s)'s tactile sense objects can be placed in a pillowcase or plastic shopping bag. Senior(s) feel each item and try to guess what the object is. Do not put more than one item in the bag at a time. Try the following items: apple, balloon, dice, fork, golf ball, ice tray, keys, banana, lemon, marshmallow, pliers, screw driver, spool,

tennis ball, spoon, napkin, towel. Or pick something safe for them to feel and guess. Praise them for identifying the item correctly.

95. Hair Dryer Bubble Blow

Therapeutic Target: Sensory Stimulation

Purpose: To provide sensory awareness, visual tracking and have some fun with the Senior(s).



Method: Use a hair dryer and bubble soap to blow bubbles by holding a large bubble wand towards the Senior(s). There are several types of bubble wands available. Caution: Bubble solution can make floors slippery. Do this activity on a carpeted area, or outside, weather permitting. The link above has several recipes for making your own bubble solution.

96. Free Form Ball Toss

Therapeutic Target: Body awareness, eye and hand coordination

Purpose: To increase body awareness through eye, hand, and foot movements.

Method: For this activity you will need a soft children's ball. Empty the room of obstacles and gently toss the ball to each senior(s), calling their name first to get their attention. A variation of this game can use an

inflated glove. Inflate the glove and tie a knot so that it stays inflated. Use a marker to draw a face onto the front of the glove and pretend its someone everyone knows, such as the manager or a friend. Have the senior(s) slap it around.

97. Touch Much

Therapeutic Target: Tactile stimulation

Purpose: Utilize tactile awareness and discrimination, increase gross motor movement.

Method: Collect packing materials such as bubble wrap, air injected plastic, crinkle wrap, newspaper, cardboard packing forms, or foam. Do not use anything that can be eaten such as Styrofoam packing peanuts. Seat the Senior(s) at the table and have them manipulate the materials. Supervise closely to insure nothing is eaten.

98. Potpourri Sachet

Therapeutic Target Olfactory Stimulation

Purpose: Utilize motor skills, stimulate sense of smell, increase self esteem.

Method: You will need Colored cloth cut into 4 - 5" squares, yarn, Fragrant dried flower petals, small bottle of fragrance oil. Have each participant smell the potpourri, lay each piece of cloth flat, place the dried petals in the center of the cloth, place a few drops of fragrance on the petals, fold up the edges around the potpourri and secure at the top

with a rubber band. Make a name tag out of wrapping paper, punch a hole in it and tie it to the sachet with a ribbon or yarn long enough so that it can be hung in the senior(s)'s room.

99. Paint Acquaint

Therapeutic Target: motor skills and dexterity

Purpose: Utilize motor dexterity, enhance creativity and self expression.

Method: Gallon size zip-lock bags, clear, and various colors of tempera paint. Group leader adds to each bag with a different color of paint, use enough paint to cover the inside surface of the bag when it lies flat. It may be a good idea to secure the top of each bag with a piece of tape. Place a paint bag in front of each Senior(s) and tell them to use it as a writing tablet. Suggest simple designs, letters and numbers, such as their name, birthday, anniversary. Allow time for Senior(s) to comply assisting where necessary. Show the Senior(s) how to lay the bag flat and smooth the bag to clear their design. Repeat 5 times using various suggestions. Various mediums can be used such as colored vegetable oil or colored sand to provide a variety of tactile stimulation.

100. Cornmeal Hide 'N' Seek

Therapeutic Target: Motor skills - OUTSIDE ACTIVITY

Purpose: Motor skills, visual, non-verbal, memory recall, tactile stimulation.

Method: Plastic bucket filled with cornmeal. Ten small objects of various size and shape (comb, ball, blocks, plastic toy animals). Each senior(s) will attempt to find an object in the sand at least once. Place all ten items into the cornmeal and have each senior(s) place their hand into the bucket to retrieve one item. When all items have been found repeat process. You can also use large puzzle pieces, as each puzzle piece is removed Senior(s) try to Position the puzzle.

101. Meaningful Movements

Therapeutic Target: Exercise, coordination

Purpose: To get the Senior(s) moving and connect with the group leader and follow simple instructions.

Method: Position the Senior(s) in a semi circle, seated.

Ten Ways to Connect Through Movement:

1. Yawn and stretch like you do when you wake up.

Try some classical favorites, like Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" or use nature or environmental sounds. Breathe deeply and stretch again, picturing your favorite scene in nature. You may enjoy looking at a picture of a nature scene, talking about what is in the picture, then yawning and stretching again.

2. Alternate arms, reaching upward as if climbing a ladder. Try the music, "Jacob's Ladder" or "Climb Every Mountain." Add in leg motions for climbing if you desire.

3. Continue moving legs as if walking or marching.

Try, "Walk of Life," by Dire Straits, the Johnny Cash song, "I Walk the Line," or Nancy Sinatra's, "These Boots Were Made for Walking" to get in the rhythm.

4. Remaining seated, move your body from side to side, reaching your arms out to the sides. Next, reach forward and back, which may be done with a partner, holding hands facing each other and pulling the other person gently toward you, then switching direction. For fun, sing "Row Your Boat" as you rock back and forth.

5. Try swimming to music. Do the motions of the crawl, the breaststroke, the backstroke, whatever you like. Then, hoist the sail, row the boat, do any nautical movements you can think of. Fun music can include old sea shanties, like "Blow the Man Down" or something more modern like a tune from the Beach Boys. Ahoy, mate!

6. Do the "Twist" and all the fun moves of the 1950s.

Try the "mashed potato," the "shoulder shrug," the "monkey," the "hand jive," anything goes! Move to the music of the movie "Grease," or you can use recordings of your favorite 50s artists, like Elvis Presley or Jerry Lee Lewis.

7. Get back to nature by moving in the gentle arc of a rainbow, drifting arms like clouds, and moving fingers like rain falling. Nice music for this is, "Hawaiian Rainbows" or "Over the Rainbow." Use a rain-stick for added effect.

8. Making hand and arm movements that embody the song text is a wonderful way to move expressively to music, and may be abbreviated or modified to your needs. Start with a song that has a few words with lots of repetition, and make up just a few motions to depict the words. 9. Move like a belly dancer to Middle Eastern music!

This can be fun with a scarf or finger cymbals (zils) for added drama.

10. Do the steps of ballroom dancing with your feet.

Try the 1- 2- 3, 1- 2- 3, of a waltz (“Blue Danube,” “Skater’s Waltz”), the tango (“La Rosita,”)



102. Name that Instrument

Therapeutic Target:
Long term Memory,
self esteem building,
social engagement,
builds alertness

Purpose: Provide
memory enhancement;

increase socialization skills; provide an avenue for enhanced learning of new information
Adaptation: Instruments can be chosen according the person’s ethnic background as well.

Method: Almost everyone knows some types of musical instruments. They may not know how to play, but they do know what they look like

and their names. This game is to enhance what is already known and provide an opportunity to learn something different.

Equipment: Pictures of different musical instruments

Description of Activity: Show a picture of an instrument and give a brief explanation of the instrument (for example, makes high notes and sounds like a bird’s song, while showing a picture of a flute). You can find a variety of pictures on the Internet or in books and magazines from a music store.

Each person who correctly identifies the instrument is awarded 1 point. The first one to reach 15 points is the winner.

You can award prizes or give a certificate of achievement to enhance enjoyment.

103. Edible Art

Therapeutic Target: Sensory stimulation, eye hand coordination, craft art, snack.

Purpose: Stimulate senses of touch, taste, and smell; encourage socialization and awareness of others if this is a group activity; provide extra nourishment in the form of a snack.

Method: Wash each Senior(s) hands thoroughly, and sanitize.

Equipment: Waxed paper; tray; yogurt, pudding, or jam; granola or chocolate chips; music

Description of Activity Place a sheet of waxed paper on a tray and situate the tray in front of the loved one. If this is a group activity, have a tray for each participant. Allow the person to choose an “edible paint”—yogurt, pudding, or jam.

Place a serving portion of the chosen “edible paint” on the waxed paper and encourage the loved one to finger paint with it. Granola or chocolate chips can be used to complete the picture. Assist when necessary.

Use music to help stimulate movement in painting. The real fun begins when the artwork is done to their liking; then it is time to dig in and eat the masterpiece.

104. Play Dough Smart Art

Therapeutic Target: Tactile stimulation, fine motor skills, dexterity, creativity

[Simple Craft Ideas](#)

Purpose: Provides tactile stimulation. Strengthen small motor control, and eye hand coordination. Provides outlet for anxiety and builds self esteem.

Method: Gather Senior(s) around tables, allow them to choose which colored play dough they would like to work with, avoid mixing colors. Instruct Senior(s) to roll squeeze, hit, press material in any way they

wish. Provide cookie cutters to create shapes. Monitor Senior(s) to avoid eating play dough. Allow this activity to be unstructured. Click on attached website for play dough design ideas by season, holiday, and theme.

105. Your Weekly Inspirational Message

Audience: YOU

[Inspirational Movies](#)

Purpose: There is no doubt, your job is difficult, demanding, and hectic. We all need some encouragement, support, and hope in our work life. These weekly messages will help you to start off your week on the right foot. Remember a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. Please take this step and encourage the other people to watch this short video as well. They may not play on your iPad but can be viewed at <http://www.simpletruths.com/movies.asp>

Method: Open the attached link and make it full screen, watch the inspirational video uninterrupted if possible. Think about how you can apply the concepts here to your own life. Have a good week, you are the Senior’s BEST resource.

[Downloads](#)

Further Reading

Pearce, Benjamin. Senior Living Communities: Operations Management and Marketing for Assisted Living, Congregate, and Continuing-Care Retirement Communities. Second Edition, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, November 2007. pp. 368

Brody, Claire M. Ph.D., Semel, Vicki G., Psy.D., Pearce, Benjamin. Strategies for Therapy with the Elderly. Second Edition. New York, NY: Springer Publishing. 2006.