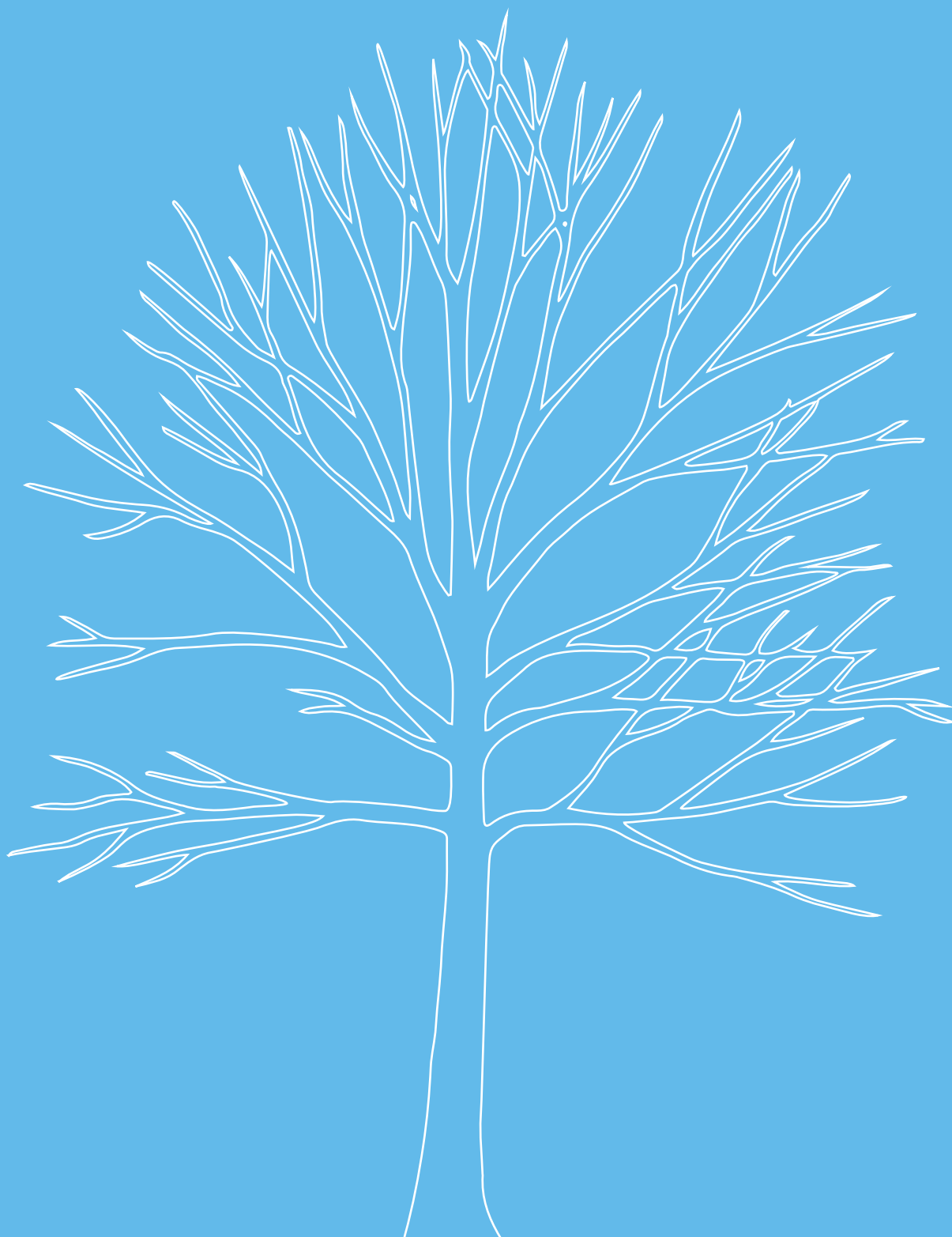


Dementia Activity Guide

Meaningful activity, mindfully designed

Active Minds 



About Active Minds

Active Minds grew from the experience, knowledge and a desire to improve the quality of life and relationships for people living with dementia, and those caring for them. Since 2010 we have been researching and developing products to assist people with dementia in leading active, engaging and fulfilling lives – enjoying activities that are meaningful to them.

Purpose

Active Minds have created this PDF for the general public as well as those working in care homes, to give advice about caring activities for people living with dementia. We are dedicated to continually improve the quality of life for people living with dementia, their families, friends and carer.



Helpful tips to support engagement with activities during Winter

As Winter arrives, the days get colder and the nights draw in, people can begin to withdraw and people living with dementia may be less inclined to socialise and interact with others. Many may avoid activities in favour of the warmth and familiarity of their home, and this may be the same for any potential visitors they may rely on to help keep them active and lift their mood.

Mood

Shorter days and less periods of daylight can play a part in most people's mood, however, for people with dementia this lack of sunlight has an increased chance of causing SAD (seasonal affective disorder). Sundowning, which tends to occur late afternoon, early evening may increase at this time too. A lack of routine, too little sleep and inactivity can contribute to this.

Staying Active

It is therefore important to encourage people living with dementia to stay active and venture out during the daytime, ensuring they take advantage of the sunlight. Activities that involve outdoor pursuits, such as gentle gardening or slow park walks, help banish the cobwebs, ensure they get some much-needed Vitamin D and encourage a positive mood.

Engagement

The cold weather turns many of us into hermits, as we hide away from the bitter winter weather. However, for people living with dementia, it is important to encourage socialising, whether this is taking them to group activities outside their home, or popping over regularly and engaging them in a game or two. This will ensure that they get the mental stimulation they need, encouraging them to talk and enjoy the company of others. There are lots of Memory Cafes and clubs around, so worth doing a little research to see if there is one near you to visit, or just pop to a favourite café.

Routine

As the afternoons start to become darker, people with dementia may begin to feel increasingly disorientated and agitated due to the unfamiliar dark evenings. It affects their routine and can interrupt the natural rhythm of their body clock. Sudden drops in temperature can also cause confusion, as again, it is a change from the norm. Regular activities can help to continue a familiar routine, especially if they occur at the same time every day. This will help a person feel relaxed, comfortable and calm.

Activity Ideas



1. Autumn Leaves Memory Game

Wrap up warm and venture to a local park or go out in the garden, taking a gentle stroll amongst the fallen leaves. At each tree, encourage people to pick up a selection of leaves, taking time to discuss the colour, shape and tree it has fallen from (you may need to bring a tree guide with you as a reference).

When back in the warmth, collect all the leaves together and play a memory game. If this is a group activity, hold up one of the leaves and see if people remember what tree it was from, or perhaps who found it, if this is a group activity.

Top Tip

Activities that may work well on one day, may not on another, so adjust and modify activities as you go – the key to all activities is enjoyment, not sticking to the rules.

2. Picture Hunting

Find as many magazines and newspapers that you can get your hands on and place on a table. Create a list of winter related items and ask people to look for pictures of those items in the magazines and newspapers (the words from the Winter word link may help this activity). Once they have found them, help them to cut the images out and stick them onto a piece of card, so they can create their own winter collage.

Top Tip

Reminisce with all activities as this will help keep the brain active and encourage conversation.



Activity Ideas

3. Decorating Pine Cones

Winter brings to the ground many pine cones. Once these have been collected, spend some time looking at them, feeling them and smelling their aroma and talking about feelings and memories these evoke.

Then have a variety of winter colours to paint them with, silver, blue, red, green and gold or even some glitter paint.

Encourage the person to choose their colours and paint the whole cone, or maybe even just the tips. Once dried they can then arrange them in a bowl to make a decorative centrepiece for the table to be admired every day.

Top Tip

When doing activities, keep the environment full of light, especially once the natural light has disappeared

4. Singalong

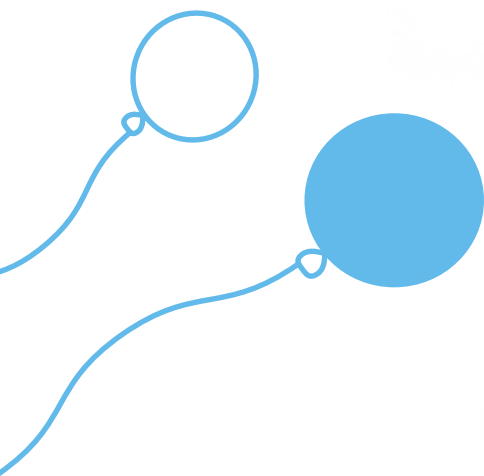
Create a playlist of era specific songs, perhaps including some well-known Christmas hits. Clear a small space in the room to encourage dancing. Let the songs play and encourage people to singalong, dance, reminisce or simply sit and listen to the music together.

Top Tip

Smile! People pick up on body language easily, and so knowing that you are enjoying the activity as well helps them relax and truly engage.

Top Tip

Activities and Reminiscing, may trigger powerful emotions. Always acknowledge what the person is feeling and allow them to express themselves and their emotions.



Activity Ideas

5. Quick Mince Pies

Get some ready made pastry and a jar of mincemeat. Work together to roll out the pastry on a floured surface, about 3 mm thick. Use a cutter to cut out round shapes for the base, place in a greased baking tray and scoop in a dessert spoon of mincemeat. Cut out a star shape to place on the top of the mincemeat and glaze with a little egg wash.

Bake these in the oven for 15-20 mins on 220c/gas 7. Once cooked and cooled a little enjoy together with a glass of mulled wine or a cup of tea and reminisce about baking days and any other memories triggered.

6. Winter Word Links

A quick simple game using word association with a Winter theme. Spend some time preparing some words that link together, writing them clearly on pieces of card, then lay them out and ask the person to choose which words they think go together.

Then discuss the word links that they have chosen and what memories they have evoked. Even if the words may not seem to match, you can still have fun and enjoy talking about them. Some examples to get you started are... Winter/Wonderland, Hot/Chocolate, Hat &/Scarf, Woolly/Socks, Long/Johns, Snow/Balls, Ice/Skating.

Top Tip

There is no pressure to get things 'right'. The main point of activities is to be engaging and fun, right or wrong answers do not matter.

Top Tip

Whilst independent activities are enjoyable, shared activities help promote increased interactions and a sense of belonging.

Top Tip

The process of reminiscing may uncover other hobbies and interests you did not know existed. Use this new information to inform other activities, trips or conversations.



Website: active-minds.org
Telephone: +44 (0) 203 488 2001
Email: info@active-minds.org

Active Minds, 117 Charterhouse Street, London, EC1M 6AA

