

Brain Exercise Activities for Older Adults with Early Dementia

Here are some ideas for activities that you can try with an older adult experiencing early dementia. The most important aspect of the activity is that it is fun! Keep trying new activities until you find something that your loved one finds enjoyable. Because each person experiences dementia differently, it's important to customize activities so that they are do-able but a little challenging.

Creative activities

1. Play music and guess the name of the song. Sing along.
2. Creative writing about nature
3. Memoir writing
4. Cut pictures out of magazines and make a collage
5. Make cards, write, and send them to loved ones
6. Adult coloring books: This website has a wide-variety of subjects and the books are visually less complicated (more appropriate for someone with dementia):
<http://store.doverpublications.com/by-subject-coloring-books.html>
7. The Museum of Modern Art in New York website for people living with dementia with lesson ideas and discussion on various works of art:
<https://www.moma.org/meetme/modules/index>
8. The NCCA Creative Caregiving Guide: a variety of free, online, research-based creative exercises. More information at:
<http://creativecaregiving.creativeaging.org/>

Visual puzzles

1. Find the difference between 2 pictures
2. Assemble puzzles (try different numbers of pieces)
3. Rebus (pictures that are put together to make a word or phrase)
4. Mazes
5. Sort objects into different buckets
6. Look at pictures of famous landmarks, ask what the names of them are, and talk about them

Word puzzles

1. Read aloud (newspaper, magazine, short stories) and discuss what you've read
2. Trivia
3. Crossword puzzles
4. Word search
5. List:
 - a. Words that start or end with certain letters
 - b. Words in a certain category
 - c. Words made from certain letters

Resources

There are many brain exercise books and resources available. Here are a few for you to consider.

1. Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UT Austin (OLLI): fee-based lectures, seminars, and classes for older adults at the Thompson Conference Center.
<http://olli.utexas.edu/>
2. *399 Games, Puzzles & Trivia Challenges Specially Designed to Keep Your Brain Young* by Nancy Linde
3. *Strengthen Your Mind Vol.1* by Kristin Einberger and Janelle Sellick
4. *Critical Thinking (The Daily Spark): 180 Easy-to-Use Lessons and Class Activities* by SparkNotes
5. *Journal Writing (The Daily Spark): 180 Easy-to-Use Lessons and Class Activities* by SparkNotes
6. mmLearn.org has free dementia activities videos at:
<http://training.mmlearn.org/video-library/topic/dementia-activities>