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# About.com Alzheimer's Disease

## Reminiscence Therapy and Activities for People with Dementia

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### Activity and Therapy

Reminiscence refers to recollections of memories from the past. It is familiar to us all and can be utilised for the benefit of others. For people with Alzheimer's disease encouraging the act of reminiscence can be highly beneficial to their inner self and their interpersonal skills. Reminiscence involves exchanging memories with the old and young, friends and relatives, with caregivers and professionals, passing on information, wisdom and skills. It is about giving the person with Alzheimer's a sense of value, importance, belonging, power and peace.

Reminiscence activity and therapies are used frequently in our own lives and well as in therapeutic settings and residential care. We all use it to cope in times of stress, such as mourning, it can also help reduce injury to our self image and it can create a feeling of intimacy and give special meaning to contact time with others.

### Different Mediums used for Reminiscence Therapy and Activities

A variety of mediums can assist the act of remembering that use different senses. It means that people who have difficulty communicating verbally can have the opportunity to do so in other ways. Establishing identity with or without words is a good example of how we have to adapt, giving a valuable opportunity to acquire and use new skills of communication.

Visually: photographs, slides. Painting pictures, looking at objects of autobiographical meaning.

Music: using familiar tunes from the radio, C.Ds, or making music using various instruments.

Smell or taste: using smell kits, different foods

Tactile: touching objects, feeling textures, painting and pottery.

### Types of Reminiscence Activities and Therapies

Reminiscence can be used as individual, group or family sessions and is generally categorised in three main types:

Simple reminiscence. Here the idea is to reflect on the past in an informative and enjoyable way.

Evaluative reminiscence is more of a therapy and may, for example, be used as a life reviewing or sometimes conflict resolving approach.

Occasionally, unpleasant and stressful information is recalled and this has been called offensive-defensive reminiscence. It can be either the cause or the result of behavioral and emotional issues. Dealing with them can provide resolution - a coming to terms with life events and possible closure.

### Inclusion of Caregivers, Friends and Relatives in Reminiscence Activity

In a care facility, or in a professional setting, the co-operation and inclusion of relatives and friends can enhance the reminiscence time for all parties. They may be able to provide photos or remember incidents in the person's life that can increase the pleasure and engage a person with Alzheimer's attention more fully.

Friends and relatives can also provide valuable information on any subject that a person may find distressing or upsetting that require increased support.

### **The Right to Refuse Activity Involvement and Alzheimer's**

Remember to respect the individual's involvement and contributions. By all means try to encourage participation but if a person does not want to be involved in the activity respect their right to refuse. Their refusal is as valid as yours, for self protection, privacy, as an act of autonomy and power over their situation.

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<http://alzheimers.about.com/cs/treatmentoptions/a/reminiscence.htm>

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