

As easy as **ABC**

Care UK's Top 100 Hints and
Tips for Activity Based Care



Welcome



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Introduction to Care UK

Our philosophy of care and our homes.

Founded in 1982, Care UK has grown to become one of the leading providers of health and social care services in the UK. We run GP centres, hospitals, care homes and provide support for people within the community.

For older people, we recognise that we can improve the quality of the life they lead by being attentive to their individual needs. Our care homes and day clubs offer a range of services from supported living and day services through to residential and nursing care.

We are a specialist in providing care to people who are living with dementia and we work hard to ensure that our unique

approach to care helps our residents enjoy their life as much as possible.

Each of our homes is different, and every resident is a unique individual with their own needs and choices.

But what is true of each of our homes is that you will find people creating programmes of activities that help enrich lives, maintain independence and allow residents to make the most of their time with us. It is those teams who have used their first-hand experience and knowledge to contribute to this book and I hope it helps inspire you with ideas for making the most of each day.



Mike Parish
Chief Executive, Care UK

Introduction to dementia care

At Care UK we assist not only the person living with dementia to live the life they choose, but also support their family, friends and local communities.

We understand how important it is to be able to provide meaningful, timely information and support that enables people to live well with dementia and keep as active as possible for as long as possible.

Quality of life and life experiences are important to us all - from being able to choose what we would like to eat to how we would like to spend our days.

Activity Based Care, ABC, is one of the approaches that has the flexibility to

provide meaningful occupation, hobbies and interests in both a group and individual basis.

The ABC ethos is that every team member can make a real difference in positively enhancing and supporting people living with dementia, from getting up and dressed in the morning to helping people continue to enjoy their hobbies and interests they wish to continue with.

We believe that we can support people to continue in their active and fulfilling lives.

Maizie Mears-Owen
Head of Dementia Care, Care UK



Introduction to Activity Based Care

Activity Based Care plays a key role in how we care for residents and goes a long way towards Care UK's vision of ensuring people are living fulfilling lives.

ABC helps residents continue to do many of the things they – and we – have always taken for granted. The activities programmes in our homes are carefully planned with resident's hobbies and interests in mind, they reflect individual likes as well as new ideas.

Visitors are welcome to attend activity groups, which is also a way to enhance their visits. I remember a son visiting his mum before Christmas, he joined in a craft group making decorations – he ended up covered in glitter and saying he hadn't had as much fun with his mum in a long time.

Activity organisers are supported by all their colleagues in providing ABC, from life skills support workers enabling independence with personal care to housekeeping staff enabling familiar activity such as housework, to maintenance teams encouraging residents to paint their own rooms. ABC is a team effort.



The most important thing we can give all our residents is time to ensure they are doing what they want, when they want to do it.

For those of you caring for a loved one, I hope this book inspires you to try some new activities, or even just adjust some of the day to day things you do. The smallest actions can sometimes make the biggest difference.

**Deirdre Timney, ABC Lead
Care UK Residential Care Services**

About this book

At Care UK homes around the country, every day, specialist activities teams work with residents to ensure they are able to get the most out of each day.

That might mean arranging special days out and parties or it could be something as simple as ensuring a resident can maintain as much independence as possible.

For those of you who may be caring for a loved one either full-time in your own home or providing support to someone living independently, you might sometimes wish you had a helping hand to inspire you. We also hear from people who would like to make the most of their time visiting a loved one living in a care home.

This book has been written with contributions from our activity teams around the country and is packed full of hints, tips and ideas both for those people caring for someone in their own home, or those making visits to care homes.

Some hints are about simple adjustments to everyday life and others are focused on making the most of a special occasion. For many people living with dementia reminiscing about the past can be the happiest way to spend some time. Not all these ideas will suit you or your loved one, but we hope you'll be able to pick and choose those that will work for you and for them.

Throughout, you'll also find a few of Deirdre Timney's own stories and experiences in *Timney's Tales*, which we hope will provide some inspiration and we also take a look at the work of Deirdre and our activities teams.

Chapter one

Tips for everyday activities



Helping people living with dementia to maintain as much of their independence as possible is a big part of Activity Based Care and goes a long way towards promoting health and wellbeing. Activities do not have to be complicated to have a positive effect.

1

The most important meal of the day

Take a new look at the breakfast table and how accessible items are. When serving, use a toast rack and decant butter, jam or marmalade into small bowls, and rather than prepare your loved one's toast for them or pour cereal and milk, encourage and aid them to do it themselves.



2

Cream or sugar?

Enable a loved one to maintain control over their meals by ensuring they can pour their own gravy onto their dinner or custard/cream onto a dessert by using small jugs. At dinner time, encourage them to serve their own vegetables from serving dishes - and don't forget the condiments!

3

Time for tea

When making tea, assess whether someone is able to pour out their own tea using a small teapot and milk jug. For some people, it may only be practical for them to add their own sugar - but everything that encourages independence is worthwhile.



"...encourage independence and allows people to live as they did in their own home"

4

Old habits die hard

Many people will have been proud home-makers throughout their lives and helping them to continue this if they choose helps encourage independence.

Many people will still be able to undertake tasks around the home, such as:

- Laying the tables for meals
- Washing and wiping up after a meal
- Using a dustpan and brush or carpet sweeper in the dining room
- Peeling vegetables for dinner; this is especially good if they have been grown from seed in the garden.
- Hanging out, and also bringing in washing. Who doesn't love the fresh smell of washing dried outdoors? The scent of sheets that have been billowing on the line can be very nostalgic too.



5 Baking

Appetites can decrease with age and ensuring people living with dementia are eating well can be a challenge.

Working together to make a batch of dough for a bread maker or whipping up some cake mix can be a fun activity and kneading dough is good for joint mobility, whilst the smell of baking can help to stimulate appetites too.



6 Take a different view

Helping a loved one carry on being able to make their own drinks or snacks can be as simple as taking a new look at the kitchen surroundings. Try clearing work surfaces of any clutter so it is easy to find a cup and tea-bags in their familiar places. You could also consider adding a see-through panel to the front of cupboard doors so that they aren't faced with a sea of wood and anxiety about where to find the essentials.



7 Layers of fun

Jellies have long been popular dessert treats, and it can be a fun way to work together at mealtimes. Trying using different flavours of jelly layered in glasses or serving dishes and adding fruit such as raspberries to float in the layers.

8

Timney's tales...

"So many of us now rely on liquid soaps and face wipes in the bathroom, but our parent's generation grew up with bars of soap and flannels. Thinking about simple items like a familiar kind of soap can make a huge difference to someone feeling confident and in control during some personal moments such as being in the bathroom."



9

If it ain't broke...

We may baulk at the thought of imperfections in our food today, but many older people will have fond memories of buying bags of broken biscuits. Away from the glossy packaging in supermarkets, you can still buy boxes of broken biscuits in many discount stores, you might be surprised how a broken Digestive could raise more interest and a remembering smile than an unbroken one!

10

How does it feel?

If a loved one's vision is impaired, then thinking about other senses becomes more important. You can buy tactile cushions covered in different types of fabrics and with ribbons and pockets attached. Or you could try making your own – simply add a new layer to an existing cushion. Think about the feel of different fabrics such as felt, corduroy, fleece and satin. Adding buttons, bows and pockets for photos or other items adds to the interest.



11

A close shave

Gentlemen who have spent their lives having a traditional brush and shaving soap as part of their morning routine may not be too happy to be presented with a can of shaving foam and disposable razor. Some habits of a lifetime are well worth keeping alive and will help maintain independence and familiarity too.

12

A step back in time

Have a look at online auction websites for vintage copies of magazines such as *Woman's Own* or *Woman's Weekly*. While the latest copies may not be of much interest, issues that transport ladies back to times gone by with recipes, stories and fashion articles could be just the thing for an afternoon's reading.

13

A sporting chance

Try searching for vintage football match programmes and scarves to relive the golden days of a favourite team. Some collectors' favourites can be very expensive, but other programmes can be found for just a pound or two and libraries may stock books about the histories of teams.



14

Timney's tales...

"We all slow down as we get

older and for many people, dealing with buttons and zips on clothes can become increasingly challenging.

"You might find it helpful to swap them for some strips of Velcro, or even change small fiddly buttons for larger ones if you're able to increase the button hole size too. Many mobility shops will also stock elastic laces for gentlemens shoes.

"If it makes the difference to someone being able to dress themselves, it can make a difference to their confidence and self-esteem too."



15

Sleep easy

Getting plenty of quality sleep becomes even

more important as we age and is particularly essential for people living with dementia. Take a look round bedrooms and think about whether they are conducive to a restful night, for example, black-out curtains or blinds are used in many Care UK homes.

Is there an annoying ticking clock nearby or does the room tend to get too hot or cold. Ensure there are familiar, comforting items in the room too.

Taking some simple steps to make the right sleeping environment can help both you and your loved one get the rest you need.





16

A different page

Libraries often stock large-print books, which are helpful for the visually impaired. But for those whose eyesight has taken too much of a turn for the worse, audiobooks and large coffee table style books could be a perfect companion.

Some libraries will hold stock of audiobooks on CD whilst they can also be downloaded online and played whenever the mood suits.



Chapter two

Tips for arts & crafts activities



Arts and crafts are a great way to keep hands and minds busy, as well as helping someone express their creative side. For people for whom communication has become more challenging, then getting involved with crafts can be a new and soothing outlet.

17

Create coloured sand jars

Jars and bottles filled with layers of

different coloured sands are a classic seaside souvenir.

Have a go at creating some using a few different colours of sand (available from craft shops) and jam jars or condiment or wine bottles.

Funnelling the different types of sand is a fun activity and can also spark conversations and memories of holidays from over the years.



18

CD case coasters

Old CD cases are great for making into large, easy

to see drinks coasters or even picture holders. Make an event of going through old photos to place inside – or even some pressed flowers, feathers, sequins or ribbons. An open case, standing on its side, can also be used as a picture holder.

19

Mosaic pictures

Stick brightly coloured pieces of paper of all different

shapes and sizes (old magazine pages are ideal) to create a mosaic picture on a piece of blank card or paper. Or use small pieces to colour in a picture instead of using colouring pens.

20 Making fat cakes to feed the birds

Birds love fat cakes, and making your own is cheaper than buying them and is a good activity. The ideal time to make these cakes is from November to April.

Scraps from the kitchen can also be included, such as bacon rind, cake crumbs, bread, sultanas, currants, apples and pears.

The best ratio is one part fat to two parts of the dry mixture.

You will need:

- Mixing bowl
- Spoon
- String
- Old yogurt pots/plastic cups
- Lard
- Wild bird seed, peanuts
- Kitchen scraps (optional)





Method

1. Mix all the dry ingredients into the mixing bowl
2. Melt the lard slightly ensuring it is not hot
3. Add the lard to the dry ingredients and mix well
4. Make a small hole in the bottom of the yogurt pots and thread a length of string through
5. Pack the pot with the mixture
6. Leave overnight for the lard to set
7. When set, remove the yogurt pot
8. Hang the cakes from a tree, shrub or bird feeder by the string.

Bird feeders must be kept clean and food which has remained untouched should be cleared away regularly. Watching the birds who come to feed is a great follow-up activity, as is cleaning the feeders and refilling them once a week.

21 Salt Dough Craft

Salt dough can be crafted into many ornaments around the home and suits any ability. It is quick and inexpensive to make using basic kitchen ingredients. Any unused dough can be stored in the fridge for a few days.

Once baked in an oven or left to dry naturally the ornaments can be painted using acrylic paint and or glitter.

An alternative to painting would be adding food colouring to the basic dough if preferred, although painting ornaments when dried adds another level to this activity.



You will need:

3 cups of flour

1 cup of salt

Water to mix into a pastry consistency

Food colouring if required

Pastry cutters

Straws (if cutting out shapes which are going to hang, make a small hole using a straw)

Rolling pin

Give each person some dough, it can either be rolled out with the rolling pin and a shape cut using the cutter, or sausage shapes can be made which is good hand exercise. Sausage shapes can be plaited together to make festive rings or letters.

Once the shapes have been made, place them in a moderate oven for half an hour. The idea is not to cook them but to dry them out. Once cold they can be painted, varnished and displayed.



22

Flower arranging

Perfect for using flowers from the garden or even re-arranging some mixed bunches from the supermarket. Try planting some bulbs in the garden for cutting, such as daffodils and tulips for spring and alliums, gladioli and dahlias for summer, or try some packets of mixed wild flower seeds to create a mixture of summer flowers for cutting and arranging.

23

Make your own flowers

If fresh flowers aren't an option for creating arrangements, have a go at making some instead, using brightly coloured tissue paper and pipe cleaners. Cut several pieces of tissue paper into a rectangular shape and lay them on top of each other.

Fold the tissue like a fan and then wind a pipe cleaner round the middle to secure it together. Then open up the tissue by pulling each layer from the top, to create a carnation-like flower and use another pipe cleaner or long sticks to be the stems.



24

Timney's Tales...

"Model making is such a classic

hobby for so many men. My husband and son enjoy buying pieces of balsa wood and making their own models. Kits to make planes and cars have long been popular and are still available, but sometimes the pieces can be too small for those whose dexterity is limited.

Look out for kits where the pieces easily slide or slot into place without being too fiddly – you might be amazed what tales a model Spitfire or Lancaster could inspire!"



25

Painting pebbles

Using brightly coloured paints to decorate and

write names on large stones and beach finds can be a great bonding activity for grandparents and grandchildren to do together whilst a trip to the seaside to collect them can be fun too.

26

Stamp collecting

Stamp collecting is a traditional hobby and something

many have done from a young age. Find the old stamp album in the attic or make a new one, even an A4 ring binder can be used with plain paper. Soak stamps from envelopes and place facedown to dry. Once dry stick them into an album or onto a piece of paper and file. Ask relatives and friends to save stamps or even ask the local newsagent to put a notice in the shop window. Or simply using an old stamp collection as a reminiscence tool puts this old hobby to work in a different way.

27 Woolly pom-poms

These wool pom-poms are fun to make and then to either use in gentle exercise or to give as presents to babies/small children.

You will need:

Cardboard
A mug or glass and 2p coin
to draw around
Odd bits of wool
Scissors
Darning needle

Method

Cut two circles of cardboard (start with the mug or glass) then cut a smaller circle in the centre of the two circles. Put the circles together and wind wool through the smaller hole and around the card. Cut the wool into manageable



lengths (about 6 feet) and continue to wind the wool through the hole and round the circle until all the cardboard is covered. When adding more wool make sure you tie the ends together. Try mixing different coloured wool, this will make the pom-pom more stimulating.

As the hole gets smaller a large darning needle can be used to pass the wool through. Once no more wool can be passed through the hole cut the wool around the edges between the two bits of cardboard. This will have to be done a bit at a time due to the thickness of the wool.

Pass a length of wool between the cardboard discs, around all the strands of wool and tie tightly. Cut and remove the cardboard. Trim any long lengths of wool. To make different size pom-poms use different size circles.

28

House!

Fans of bingo will enjoy a game with the whole family. Make up some simple number sheets and get some felt tips to cross them off with. You don't need to invest in a full bingo set – some small pieces of paper with each number written on them are perfect for pulling out of the hat.



29

No pressure

Ladies who enjoyed arts and crafts over the years may have taken a keen interest in pressing flowers – either in a purpose-made wooden press or between the pages of heavy books. Having a go again with a few heads of pansies, petunias, impatiens and some leaves can not only be interesting at the time, but also provides a craft opportunity when the flowers and leaves are dried several weeks later.

30

Watch with mother

How many parents will have joined their children in watching early children's television shows such as Bill and Ben, Andy Pandy or The Woodentops? The Flowerpot Men celebrated their 60th anniversary in 2012 and many of the original episodes can be bought on DVD. A TV-memories afternoon could be fun for all the generations as grandchildren discover what shows Nana and Grandad remember. For some more grown-up viewing, try Dad's Army, Are You Being Served or Upstairs, Downstairs.



31

Get snap happy

If you have a keen photographer in the family, an afternoon spent together taking pictures can not only be stimulating, but create a series of picture memories for you to enjoy.

An SLR camera will look more familiar to the older generation than a small point and shoot camera - although it won't matter if a disposable camera gets dropped - but an hour or two in the garden taking snaps of plants and flowers or whatever grabs the imagination can be a happy time that creates happy memories too.

Chapter three

Tips for helping people to maintain independence



Many people living with dementia will still be able to carry out some of their existing hobbies and interests independently – all you need to do is ensure there is a ready supply of the equipment they need.

32

A stitch in time

Knitting. Many ladies will have been lifelong

knitters and it is great for maintaining dexterity too. Knitted squares can be sewn together to make blankets and joining or creating a 'knit and natter' group is a great way to make new friendships. Many maternity units will gratefully receive baby hats and some charities will collect packs of knitted squares too.



33

Do It Yourself

Just as many ladies will have enjoyed

traditional hobbies, so will a lot of men been keen DIY'ers. Working together on a practical task such as putting up a shelf can be beneficial. If dexterity doesn't allow for working a screwdriver, then being in charge of the spirit level, holding the screws or simply being asked for advice allows him to still be involved.

34

Word search or crossword puzzles

It is handy to always have a supply of these

to hand together with easy to grip pens, and highlighters are good for word searches.

35

Drawing and colouring

Expressing a creative

side through artwork can be very therapeutic. Always ensure any colouring books are age appropriate or simply supply plain paper and pens or paints.



36

Jigsaw puzzles

This is a very traditional past-time and a lovely

activity to do alone or with children and grandchildren.

Always consider the age appropriateness of the jigsaws.



37

Join in

Rather than crafts activities becoming

something someone does alone, get stuck in too. If cooking is something you always did together, carry on. If getting covered in glitter and glue together is something that will raise a smile then that just makes the experience even more worthwhile.

38

Get online

Staying in touch with family can be very important in maintaining happiness and wellbeing, especially for those who may be

housebound. Consider installing an online video-calling programme, such as Skype, on a laptop or computer – today's technology savvy grandchildren will love the idea of getting Nana or Grandad online!



39

Clothing

For those living with dementia, choosing and seeing familiar items such as their clothes ready for the next day can be a comforting sight. Instead of all clothes being kept in a wardrobe, try laying out some things for the next day in plain sight on a chair, or draped over a drawer. This will also aid someone to maintain independence when dressing.

40

Thanks, but no thanks

This book is full of tips and ideas for activities, but independence is also about having the right to opt out of taking part in something and either choosing to spend time alone or perhaps just watching from the sidelines.

41

Enjoy the view

There can be few of us who don't enjoy sitting quietly and relaxing sometimes. Think about creating a quiet area with a favourite comfy seat that can become a safe haven. A view of the street outside could be perfect for watching the world go by.



42

Pen to paper

For the more traditional amongst us, take time to write an old-fashioned letter – if your loved one is not able to write, they could dictate the contents to you, or just listen aloud while you share your ideas for a letter to a family member or far-away friend. Make an occasion of walking to the postbox together, and always ask recipients to reply via post so you have a response to look forward to.



43

Watch the birdie

Care UK's homes around the country took part in a national birdwatching event early in 2013.

So many homes reported how much residents enjoyed some time sitting by a window and watching the birds that came and went from the garden outside and recording the different breeds of birds they spotted.



44

It's all in the question

Helping someone maintain

independence with clothing or food choices can be made more effective depending on how you approach it. Consider replacing "what would you like to wear?" which can be overwhelming, with "would you prefer the red or blue cardigan?" Holding up the clothing makes choosing easier too. Or replace "what would you like for breakfast?" with "would you prefer some toast or some cereal this morning?"

Chapter four

Tips for special occasions



Whether it is Christmas, a birthday or just a day when you want to do something special, there are always plenty of options. If you are able, a day out can be fantastic, but if getting out and about can be difficult, have a think about ways to bring the outside in!

45

Take some sea air

If you live near the coast, a day out at the seaside

can be a great uplifting activity.

Contact mobility assistance schemes to hire a wheelchair if you need one and take a stroll along the prom. An ice-cream or bag of chips by the pier and watching the world go by are a lovely way to get some fresh air.



46

Timney's Tales...

"Getting out and about can

be a challenge sometimes, but when that is the case, I try and think around the problem.

A while ago, I was creating a beach scene montage with a resident in one of our homes and she revealed that although she had held a very important job and travelled extensively, she had never tasted candy floss - needless to say, we found some for her to try!"





47 A day at the seaside

It is not always easy to arrange a big day out – so why not do something a bit different and bring the outside inside!

Ask friends and relatives if they have items you can borrow, and anything you gather together could be used for another activity too.

- Spend some time reminiscing about visits to the beach in days gone by – where did your loved one go? What did they do there? What sights, sounds and smells do they remember?

You could even make a scrapbook with pictures and quotes.

- Gather sea shells and fill trays with sand to encourage building sandcastles and shapes. This can be a lovely activity to bring grandchildren and grandparents together.
- Play games such as fishing with nets and plastic fish, make a crazy golf or pitch and putt course, or have a game of beach ball.
- How about ice creams and candy floss?
- Have a picnic tea or a traditional fish and chip supper!

48

St George's Day

Many Care UK homes celebrate events such as

St George's Day or Burns Night with themed evenings. At home, these days can be occasions to plan some activities such as talking about memories of previous celebrations, making decorations or even a themed meal.



49

Anniversaries

Marking a special date, such as a wedding anniversary, can spark memories

of times gone by and be of great importance, both for couples still together and those who may be widowed. Spend some time looking at old photographs and talking about special times, cook a favourite meal and let memories gently return.



50

Traditions

What traditions were always upheld at

Christmas or Easter time? If decorating the tree was a big occasion or baking a Christmas or Simnel cake were essential tasks, keep those traditions going. Memories of family traditions will be strongly held and be comforting to remember.

51

Timney's Tales...

"Some of our homes have

'wish trees' - where a tree is painted on the wall and each resident writes a wish on a leaf. We can't always make someone's wish come true, especially if they've always wanted to go to Hawaii! But one lady at our Hinton Grange home in Cambridge had always wanted a kiss from a handsome footballer - so the home took her to see the local team play and arranged for her to have her kiss! With a bit of planning, it was easy to make happen. Why not ask your loved one what their wishes are, you might be surprised at what you could make come true!"



52

Traditional games

Turn a weekend evening into a special occasion with a traditional family games night. There is a huge list of card games from snap to bridge or try board games like chess, Ludo, dominoes, Scrabble etc.



53

Christmas garlands

Paper chains give a traditional feel amongst the tinsel and lights and can be a nice relaxing activity to do together. Strips of coloured paper fastened together with glue or tape to make strings of chains can be made as long as you like and be an activity that you can spread over a few days.



54

Let's get quizzical

Here's a simple quiz suggestion.

This could work as a quiet activity to enjoy over a cup of tea, or different family members could compete against each other.

Decode these clues:

- 26 - L of the A
(letters of the alphabet)
- 18 - H on a GC
(holes on a golf course)
- 10 - GBH on the W
(green bottles hanging on the wall)
- 13 - in a BD (in a bakers dozen)
- 101 - D (dalmatians)
- 52 - C in a P (cards in a pack)
- 11 - P in a FT
(players in a football team)
- 24 - BBB in a P
(blackbirds baked in a pie)
- 7 - W of the W
(wonders of the world)
- 64 - S on a CB
(squares on a chess board)



55

Go national

Have a think about what major national events are happening throughout the year that you could celebrate. For example, why not settle down to watch some of the Wimbledon tennis tournament with some strawberries and cream, get all the family to place their bets on the winner of the Grand National or mark the birthday of The Queen with tea and cake served on your best china.

Chapter five

Tips for health and wellbeing



Maintaining health and fitness takes on increasing importance as we age, but equally can be more challenging. Finding activities that are enjoyable as well as achievable is key to helping someone to keep fit and well.

56

Go to the garden centre

Picking up supplies for a new gardening project is the perfect excuse to go a garden centre. Have a browse amongst all the different plants and enjoy the fragrances and textures – and since many garden centres now have tea rooms too, it's the perfect excuse for a cup of tea and a slice of cake!

57

Fruit tasting

Supermarkets today sell many exotic foods that may not have been available several years ago. Choosing a selection of new fruits and then spending some time together preparing them and discovering the textures and aromas can be a stimulating experience.

58

Carpet Bowls

A game of carpet bowls or skittles can be good family fun and a great way to get grandparents and grandchildren interacting. This gentle exercise can also help keep people active and can be done either standing up or whilst sitting down. If you don't have skittles, you could try collecting plastic 2-pint milk containers or drinks containers and filling them with a small amount of sand or water to help them stand up straight.



59 Gardening

Growing flowers, fruit and vegetables is something many people will have enjoyed over the years.

Ensuring someone is able to exercise their green fingers not only helps maintain hobbies and independence, it is also perfect for getting some fresh air and stimulating conversations.



Whilst kneeling over flower and vegetable beds might no longer be an option, raised beds offer a perfect solution. A simple raised bed filled with compost can be perfect for growing vegetables such as lettuces, carrots, beetroot and spinach. If space is an issue, try growing some runner beans up canes and making an event of picking the beans together.

Tending flowers is also a lovely summer activity and fragrant plants such as lavender, freesias and lilies are easy to grow and great for stimulating the senses.



60

Parachute exercise

Gentle exercise is beneficial for

helping older people stay flexible and maintain muscle strength. This exercise is one for all the family to do together – the more the merrier! Sit in a circle or square with a large sheet in the middle, and each of you holding the edges. Gently lift the sheet in the air and let it float down like a parachute before lifting again. Try adding different size balls and try to keep the ball on top of the sheet as it moves.

61

Take a food and drink tour

Try samples of different varieties of

foods, such as cheeses from around the world. Tea lovers could sample different drinks, such as chamomile or peppermint tea or a refreshing fruit tea. Or how about ringing the coffee changes with a cappuccino, latte or mocha.

62

Walk it off

Fresh air and a walk are good exercise whatever

your age – just tailor how strenuous it is to the right level. A gentle stroll around the block or to a nearby shop to fetch a paper can be great for blowing off cobwebs, staying mobile and, of course, a change of scene.



63

Armchair exercise

Exercise doesn't have to be strenuous to be beneficial. Try

sitting together and spending some time stretching out your arms in front or to the side and moving them in circles. Depending on mobility, you could do the same thing one leg at a time.



64

An indoor garden

If outside space or access is difficult, there are many

indoor plants that will thrive and give a sense of the outdoors, inside. Spend some time planting indoor bulbs such as hyacinths or Paperwhite narcissi to enjoy their strong fragrance in spring. African Violets and phalaenopsis orchids are easy to care for and produce pretty, colourful blooms. Regularly watering and caring for plants can be an additional beneficial activity after the initial planting.

65

Pat the dog

The positive benefits of being around animals are well

documented. If you have pets, they are sure to enjoy some extra fuss and attention. Stroking a dog can be especially beneficial for someone who has lost some communication skills – nobody needs to say anything to enjoy a stroke! Fish tanks too can be very calming to sit and watch.



66

Keep the noise down

Noisy environments can be disorienting at the best of times but for someone living with dementia, being confronted with a blaring radio in one room and a loud television in the other, it can be especially confusing. Take time to think about the right sounds to create a relaxing and comforting environment.

67

Turn it up!

The right noise at the right time can be the opposite of confusing – favourite songs or music from yesteryear can have a hugely beneficial effect. You might be amazed at how easy it is to remember lyrics from 40 years ago! Try seeing if your local library loans CDs of old music hall favourites.

68

You are not alone

Caring for someone can feel like an isolating experience, so why not seek out some local clubs or support groups. Many towns will have groups run by large national charities or by local churches or other support groups. It could mean time for your loved one to enjoy away from home and with people of a similar age but also some valuable 'down time' for you to focus on yourself for a while.



70

Reading the newspaper

Reading national and local newspapers has formed part of many people's daily routines for many years and doesn't have to stop, even if it takes longer than it used to. Keeping up with local, national and international news can be a source of conversation too.

69

Poetry writing and reading

Borrow poetry books from the local library and read them together with loved ones. Try writing your own poetry perhaps by using different objects to spark the imagination – like a seashell or a flower.



71

Make mine a pint

A trip to the pub for a pint of bitter or glass of sherry can be so simple, and yet a greatly-missed treat.

Find a quiet and friendly pub nearby and take an early evening or lunchtime trip out for a pint and some pork scratchings.





72

Move to the beat

Going to a Friday night dance will have been a regular activity for many people and may even have been where they met their future husband or wife.

A full-on Jive may be beyond the agility of most older people, but a gentle sway and toe-tap in time to the music could bring memories of those trips to the dance hall flooding back and you might learn a few steps into the bargain!

73

Keep your nose clean

Smells and scents can have a

multitude of benefits – from evoking memories to having a calming and relaxing influence. Try to remember some key scents from occasions over the years, such as the pine smell from the Christmas tree, the scent of a favourite flower or the smell of baking and talk about them – or why not take in the bouquet of a favourite wine or tippie!

75

Hand massage

The simple act of massaging in some hand

cream can be real treat for ladies. Whilst for those who enjoy a manicure, a file and polish can up the stakes on the treat even more! Physical touch can have a very calming and reassuring effect, and offering a simple massage and manicure is an easy way to achieve this. Think about scent again too, with fragranced lotions and creams.

74

Here ducky...

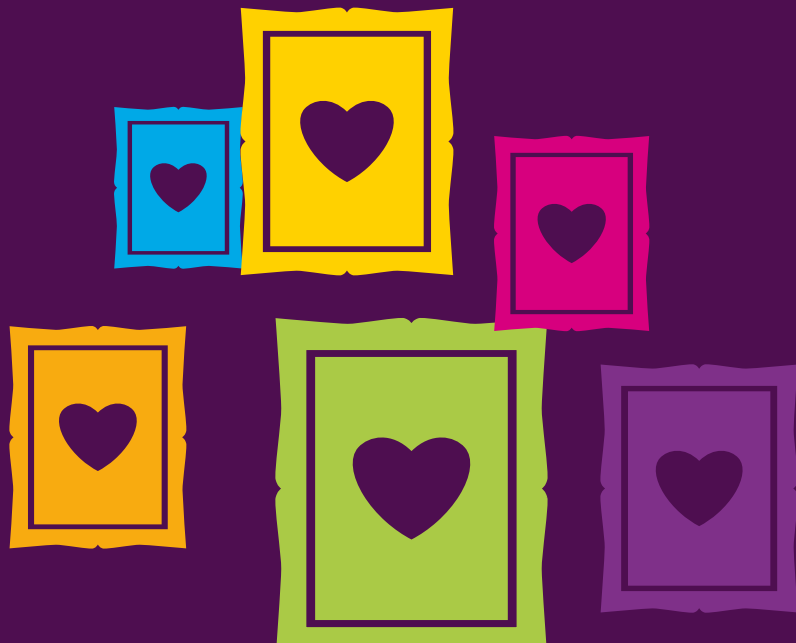
Taking a trip out doesn't have to

mean piling up the car with all sorts of equipment and making a full day of it. A simple visit to the park to feed the ducks can be all it takes to get some fresh air and exercise, not to mention the simple pleasure of sitting on a bench and watching the world rush by.



Chapter six

Tips for reminiscence



For many people living with dementia, memories from times gone by can be easier to access and talk about. Different objects and pictures can help spark memories and create a conversation about the 'good old days' – have a go, you never know what interesting stories you might discover!

76

A mixed bag

This sensory activity is ideal for sparking

memories and building conversation. Fill a bag with different objects and encourage your loved one to feel the contents and guess what they are.

Try tactile shapes, such as hairbrushes, screwdrivers or sandpaper, or memorable scents like lavender, baby powder or soaps.



77

Memorabilia

Just one small item can get everyone talking.

Draw attention to simple items of memorabilia, such as shells from a day at the seaside, old board games, photos or decorative ornaments.

78

Create a cookery book

This idea will not only help get you talking, it will also result in a valuable keepsake that could be passed down the generations. Talk about favourite meals and recipes and write them down together. Create an elaborate scrapbook or a simple ring-binder that you can add to over time.



79

Create a reminiscence book of your local area

This is a nice activity to do together and will also spark conversation and memories. Gather together some pictures of your local area from over the years – what pictures do you have at home? Many local newspaper offices and libraries keep photo archives and you may be able to order copies.

Lots of local newspapers also print weekly 'Memory Lane' columns too. Get a scrap book and some glue and spend time going through the pictures together, talking about the memories of each place and occasion, where it is and what purpose it had.

Stick the pictures in the book and include some detail about the memories of each one. This is a great reminiscence activity for both the time you do it, and also for future use too.

80

Name that tune!

Why not buy a CD of some music from when your loved one was younger and play a 'name that tune' game. Or create your own mix of favourite music and songs with tracks downloaded from the internet. You could create a couple of teams amongst the family and offer small prizes to the winners. You can also buy CDs of nostalgic sounds, such as steam trains and wartime aircraft.



81

War-time recipes

Rationing meant many recipes and meals had to be adapted during the Second World War – try talking about memories of war-time meals or have a go at some of the many recipes it is easy to find online.

82

Sweet memories

Who doesn't love a sweet? Put together a jar of old fashioned mint humbugs, licorice and barley sugars and remember the days when you could buy a quarter of sweets in a paper bag for a few pence!



83 On the road

Car enthusiasts will always remember their first set of wheels. Libraries and book shops will stock books about cars from over the years – reminiscing over pictures could bring back memories of learning to drive or first day trips out in the car.



84

This is my life

Work together to create a life storybook.

Include details such as:

- Career and family history
- Any nicknames or how they like to be addressed.
- Food likes and dislikes,

- Favourite films or television shows and favourite hobbies.
- Photos and mementos.

If the time does come where your loved one moves into a care home, this information will be invaluable to help care teams get to know them and make settling in easier.

85

Timney's Tales...

"A retired watchmaker

in one of our homes hated that he couldn't keep his hands busy any more. So we gathered together some broken clocks, screws and equipment and he was delighted to be able to tinker away with them. Some of them he knew were beyond repair, but keeping his hands busy was enough to stop the boredom and tap into a lifetime of experience.

I told another home manager about it and she was inspired to put together a box of pipes, coupling and spanners for a retired plumber."



86

Have a rummage

Put an old shoebox to new use as a

hobby-themed rummage box. Keen dressmakers might like a box filled with spools of cotton, ribbons and buttons, whilst DIY enthusiasts could fill theirs with nuts, bolts, screws and paintbrushes.

Many Care UK homes create these boxes for when people want to spend some quiet, reflective time.

87

Dress for the occasion

Grandchildren will have great fun

dressing up in some vintage clothes and hats from a second-hand shop or the attic. Bringing back memories of old-style fashions could start all sorts of conversations and memories about everyday clothes and special occasions.

88

Memory boxes

Similar to a rummage box, a memory box can be used time and again.

Not only are they comforting to someone living with dementia, but just like life story books, can be a useful aid to help a future carer get to know someone. A shoe box filled with familiar things could include:

- Old photographs (write a short explanation on the back)
- Badges from youth groups, military service or professional bodies
- Tickets and programmes from the theatre, cinema and sporting occasions
- Trinkets from family occasions and holidays
- Box from a favourite perfume or aftershave
- Items which reflect hobbies and interests e.g. fishing floats, crochet hook, stamps

Instead of a shoe box, retired businessmen could find comfort from a favourite briefcase that was used for work for many years.

89

First day at school

What older gentleman won't remember the day when he got his first pair of 'long trousers'? When it's the first day of school, a new uniform or school tie is great for getting grandfathers chatting about their own school memories. And if you're lucky, he may even help polish shoes too!

90

Tie it up

And grandmothers can get involved on school mornings too, let them join in with plaiting or brushing a youngster's hair.



91

Timney's Tales...

"When I was a child, my whole

family got together one sunny day and spent the day in the garden having a picnic lunch and playing ball games.

But one of the strongest memories of the day is from when my grandfather sat in an old-fashioned deckchair, the fabric split and he fell right through.

I remember we all absolutely fell about laughing while he struggled, unhurt, to get up again.

There have been so many times we have told that story over the years – even my own children know it well and laugh about it. They say laughter is the best medicine and there is something particularly resonant about remembering funny times and having a chuckle about them."



92

Rusty nails and greasy rags

Do you have a toolbox full of car maintenance or DIY tools and equipment? If you haven't cleared out those broken screwdriver bits or bald strips of sandpaper or sorted through an assortment of different sized screws in a while, it could be a perfect job for someone who was a proud handyman throughout his life.

If dexterity is limited, a quick scan to remove small nails or nuts and bolts could help prevent frustrations.





93

**Of all the films
in all the world...**

Afternoons taking in a black and white movie at the pictures will be a fond memory for many people.

Today's films may be more about special effects and 3D images but why not relax with a good old classic that can transport you both back to yesteryear – popcorn optional!



94

All sewn up

Similar to the toolbox, keen seamstress

might enjoy bringing some order to a tangle of ribbons and spools of cotton or sorting through a pile of buttons, putting different size knitting needles back in their pairs or winding wool back into balls. Again, when dexterity is a challenge, removing loose needles and pins beforehand could prevent frustration.

95

Dress for the occasion

Keen football fans will likely have

wonderful memories of watching their team score that ultimate goal. The hustle and bustle of a stadium might not be a practical destination anymore, but an afternoon in front of the big game on television, team shirt and scarf on, and a half-time pie and a pint might just be the next best thing.

96

Timney's Tales...

"Most of us now rely on

digital cameras to capture memories of holidays and days out, but if your family is anything like mine, you could well have several packets of photos from the days of having them all printed but have never got round to sorting through them for albums.

"This could be a perfect task for a grandparent or older relative, bringing back lots of lovely memories and having the familiar comfort of printed photos around them too."





97

A perfect picture

Another way of working with old photographs rather than putting them in albums is to mix them up and then spend time putting them into different groups, such as holidays, days out, Christmas, pets, birthdays etc.

You could talk about the photographs as you go through them or you could label the photos to keep groupings together. You'll soon discover which pictures generate the most memories and the best conversations. Topics of conversation could include comparing family resemblances and guessing who is who.

98

A commercial break

Online video sharing websites, such as You Tube, have lots of videos of old adverts to search for and watch.

How about searching for some adverts from the 1950s and 60s and see how well they are remembered from the first time around. Ads for chocolates, breakfast cereals, clothes and even cigarettes can all be found.



99

Take a deep breath

Whatever activities you are doing, it is important to ensure you slow down, stay calm and patient and work at your loved one's pace. People do slow down as they get older and trying to rush someone can just cause confusion and anxiety. Enjoy having some time to slow down and not feel you have to rush.

100 And finally...

'Care is something we all have within us – my top tip is to think about how you would like to be treated and use that as your starting point.'

Time is perhaps the most valuable thing you can give to someone, just spending some time being there with them can often mean more than anything else.'

**Debra McDonald, Activity Assistant
Meadow Court care home**



Further information



Sources of further information:

- For more information about Care UK and our homes and services, visit our website, **www.careuk.com**
You will also find a series of free guides to download, offering advice on caring for someone with dementia, respite care and advice on choosing a care home.
- Active Life is a quarterly magazine produced by Care UK. It gives relatives of residents and visitors to our homes an insight into what is happening in our homes around the country, hints and tips on caring for someone and news about Care UK. If you would like to receive a free copy of Active Life, please email, including your postal address to: **rcsnews@careuk.com** or visit **www.careuk.com** to download a copy.

- Many Care UK homes will have links with local charities that support both people living with dementia and their carers – ask your nearest home for more information and contact details.
- A number of our homes hold regular support sessions for family carers through their Friends groups, dementia cafes and drop-in sessions. All are welcome at these groups – please just ask your nearest home for more information.



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