

# REMINISCENCE

If you're at home caring for a person living with dementia, it is likely you are experiencing less social contact as a result of the measures taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19.



But it's really important to keep you and the person you're caring for as physically and mentally active as you possibly can while at home.

We have prepared a collection of resources which you might find helpful during these times of uncertainty.

We hope that you find the resources we've listed useful. We have no affiliation with any of the providers/organisations and we apologise for any omissions.

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Dementia Services Information and  
Development Centre  
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**DSiDC**

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and Development Centre



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*“ We all possess memories, we all have our own unique life history. Recalling the past is a means of owning it and hence preserving ourselves. It is a here and now process which holds the teller and the told in relationship with each other.”*

Faith Gibson (1998)

## Reminiscence

We are all born quite similar but it is our life experience that shapes us the most, not the biology. Every person has an identity. Memory loss affects everybody differently and some people living with dementia can have difficulty remembering what gives them a sense of identity, who they are, where they are now, recent conversations and interactions with others. However people with dementia can often remember events from childhood or early adulthood quite well, and this is a strength that reminiscence draws on.



Many people with dementia find themselves having things done 'for' them or 'to' them. When a person shares something about their past and another person shows interest it is a wonderful opportunity for the person with dementia to feel they are giving something back rather than always being the one who is receiving or listening. Reminiscence is an opportunity for this.

For people with cognitive difficulties, it is important to tap into all the senses to trigger memories. A picture to look at, an object to touch, a song or a poem to listen to or something to smell or taste can all take someone back in time, often to a very specific memory.

If you know the person well enough, you will know the kinds of things that might relate to their past. Knowing stories from a person's life will help you connect with that person.



## Use the five senses:

**Visual:** memories can be triggered by pictures, old newspapers, magazines, Reading an extract from an old book or a newspaper can also stimulate memories. Old TV programmes, recorded sport events can be very useful here too.

**Auditory:** from music to every day sounds, like the bleating of sheep, ringing of the school bell, traditional tunes, the song people danced to when they first met, etc. You can bring up videos on YouTube to find many of these sounds.

**Taste:** flavours from the past, a homemade roast, warm soda bread, spiced beef - different people will react to different stimuli.

**Smell:** whether it is food, a perfume, a detergent, the smell of old books, freshly cut grass, seaweed, damp soil, aftershave; these and many others can bring back memories.

**Haptic:** this is our sense of touch. Our sense of touch is the one which deteriorates least with the passing of the time. In the absence of any relevant textures, gently holding the hand of a person will let them know that you are there for them.



## Topics that can be useful to draw on for reminiscence:

**Childhood memories:** food, school, uniform, friends, messing.

**Home life:** from the parents' home to flying the nest. Friends, first love, partner, children.

**Working life:** first job, successes and disappointments. Where did the first money earned go. Colleagues, uniforms...

**Hobbies and interests:** music, reading, outdoors and nature, art, DIY.

**Transport:** learning to cycle, first car, significant trips. First time on a plane.

**Sport:** play or watch. Favourite teams.

**Local neighbourhood:** shops, , significant places in the community, the main square, the church, walks in parks or rivers.

**Pets:** if any, what pet did you have, what were their names, or colours.

You can download a reminiscence **booklet** from [www.makinghaytheatre.ie](http://www.makinghaytheatre.ie)

You can find reminiscence activities on the website below.

Living with Dementia: leisure and reminiscence activities.

<https://tinyurl.com/u3jb76z>

