

What is entailed in (a) making the reminiscence activities relevant and enjoyable for group participants (b) good use of the creative arts.

The reminiscence programme (RYCT) programme enabled the participants to make a wonderful journey together.

Preparation before every session (there are usually 12 weekly 'themed' sessions) is very important - from the warming-up exercises before visitors arrive, onwards. The group is very much about team participation and consists of the leaders, apprentices, volunteers, Sue, who made delicious cakes for tea, the carers and those suffering from Dementia. Everyone had to be in place to enable a smoothly run and cohesive session.

The team leaders set the pace and part of their job is to enable everyone to feel relaxed and comfortable within the setting. Care was given to the timing and duration of activities to ensure that the participants remained engaged.

Before we warmly welcomed our visitors, we set up the room by making a large circle of chairs and placed familiar objects from the past and present on small tables within the circle. These reminiscence objects are used as memory prompts and may assist the participants when recalling events in their lives. We combined this with the use of a flip chart with drawn objects and the title of the week's 'theme' for example 'Winter Warmers'.

For our 'Winter Warmers' session there were endless supplies of woolly scarves, gloves, hats, hot water bottles, balls of wool etc...for 'the next generation – babies and children session', there were dolls, shawls, baby baths, napkins, talcum powder etc. As apprentices we were encouraged to bring in relevant objects that fitted with the theme and would provoke memories for us all.

It was very important to develop good listening skills as during the course of a conversation aspects were often repeated. It was also important to be completely honest, not to be patronising and not to talk over the person suffering with dementia but to ensure they were central to the conversation.

When reporting back to the larger group from small group activities it was important to speak audibly and succinctly making sure that everyone understood what was being said and be especially aware of those who might be feeling left out/overlooked. It was important to have empathy with the participants and to appreciate that during the process of remembering the past that some sad and painful things might arise.

Together, with the use of the creative arts we remembered our school days, our first job, our girlfriends/boyfriends, our wedding day, our children, our interests, our holidays and more. It didn't matter if we hadn't got married or had children we could still share the experiences of those who had.

Using all the senses (acting, dancing, playing a musical instrument, singing, poetry and artwork, maximised communication possibilities and enabled memories to be retrieved.

Singing and music was an important part of the activities as songs and tunes are retained in the memory of a person with Dementia. This took place between activities or during them. It was entered into with much enthusiasm.

Page II

I remember seeing Mary's lit up face at the chance to sing. Ursula with her squeeze box accompanying our songs - she had not been able to play for many years. Len's jazz piano playing thrilled us as did Hussein's drumming. They were all empowering moments!

Dancing was also important and got everyone up and on their feet. It could be to a simple song like 'Oranges and Lemons' or Deborah and Len ballroom dancing together or Kate jiving.

Taking turns to 'act out' an action whether it was in the large group holding the baby doll and naming it to lighting the paraffin heater to keep warm in the winter it was all achieved in an easy manner. We supported each other, sometimes adopting the same activity or breaking into song.

We (perhaps 4 or 5) used theatre to act out events to the rest of the group. I will always remember the scene with Victor welcoming us to his house for one of his wonderful parties and the excitement we expressed over getting an invitation and his story about ironing his hair before a big night out as part of the theme 'Going out and having fun'. I remember acting as a somewhat irate customer with Marion as a market stallholder in a scene involving her Father's fruit and vegetable stall. She was barely eleven years old and worked on Saturday's. This was a scene for 'starting work and working lives'.

Visual art was used to draw stories, maps, places, objects or people that were meaningful to the participant. We encouraged the carers to keep scrapbooks of photographs, drawings, mementoes as a record to look back over and for everyday use going forward.

There was always a lot of fun and laughter in the room and of course tea time was always a high spot with Sue's special cakes to look forward to!!

The skills that group leaders need, reflecting on their strengths and areas where they need to develop their skills and/or confidence further.

As a group leader it is very important to listen carefully, this allows the person with Dementia time to talk, however long that takes. They also need to be warm, friendly and patient and have a good sense of humour and fun and able to put people at their ease.

It is important not to patronise or cut short what someone is saying or speak for them or across them to their carer.

It is important to access and retain information when working in small groups so it can be fed back accurately and succinctly to the larger group. The retention and passing on of information is essential because it puts a value on what is said and shows an appreciation of the content.

Whether addressing a small or larger group it is essential to get attention by projecting one's voice and making good eye contact with all the participants especially those who are naturally quiet or withdrawn. This prevents anyone missing out on information.

It is important to co-operate well with project team members, (leaders, apprentices, volunteers) though out the sessions, for instance, when setting up the room for the day and similarly at the end of the day when clearing away. The participants need to walk into a room which feels calm and where the people they are dealing with are calm and confident too. Everything needs to be in place and welcoming.

Page III

Before participants arrive, it is the group leader's responsibility to ensure a warm-up time with exercises, voice projection and discussion re plans, takes place and to make sure that tasks such as adherence to schedule, session records etc. are allocated to apprentices each week.

When I worked on the 'Winter Warmers' project with David, Anne and Cate we found that organisation and timing was everything, we needed to know who was going to do what and when, so we made a plan which we strictly adhered to.

There were some things, which we could have done better! We could have invited everyone in the circle to join in the 'how we kept warm' activities i.e. miming 'chopping wood', it would have felt more fun and more supportive, especially as it was our first activity. It might have been preferable to have shorter song lyrics, some were too lengthy but nevertheless songs such as 'food glorious food' and 'button up your overcoat' were sung with gusto!

David with his amazing voice read the poem he composed during the tea break, it was a very moving experience and earlier he had read a winter poem by Robert Louis Stevenson.

It was a happy and busy session with acting, singing and craftwork. After the 'first activity' we divided into small groups for a 'Winter Warmer' chat, some participants had knitted squares over the Christmas holiday, which was wonderful! We hope eventually to sew all the squares together to make a RYCT blanket as a keepsake reminder of the 12 weeks we spent together.

Vivienne took over Pam's square and finished it off. David had bought his! Len's wife had produced a beautifully complicated square. Lots of conversation and a good deal of laughter was generated. Kate had brought in a knitted dishcloth, which Vic's Mother had made, and she had attached mementoes to it with safety pins.

We had to attend to the winter warmer drink, which was bubbling away on the cooker, and it would have been quite easy to forget this with everything else that was going on. Other things like shopping had to be factored in, e.g. we didn't buy quite enough apple juice, which meant we could only have half measures of our winter warmer drink instead of a glass!

During tea break we made pom poms or did things like French knitting and Cat's Cradle.

We finished on time. I think we all felt that we had achieved our aims.

I am very happy to set up sessions, plan and resource them and run them but I think I need to work on commanding the group's attention. I found the large group represented more of a challenge than the smaller one when getting everyone's attention. I think this is something I could master with practice.

How to work with people with dementia so as to support their well being and maximise what they get from the project.

I think it is important as it is with anyone to develop a rapport with the person with Dementia. Trust is also important, as is confidentiality. Lots of things are revealed during the time we spend together and I think it is essential not to treat the private information one might be party to like chatter and to value someone's life experiences. Consistency is also important as is a smile of welcome and a wave goodbye. I think one should treat the person with Dementia as you would treat a friend and be supportive, kind and listen well. Supporting them to go beyond their

comfort zone, this could be done by example. Perhaps to stand up and dance a Scottish jig as one apprentice did which I thought was brave or the Jewish songs that Pam sang on her own.

I have had some lovely moments working with Marion, one quite recently when she interviewed me about my life, thus turning the tables. She had got together with Jenny's help a list of questions and started to go over them, repeating them many times before we settled down and then things started to happen. I promised myself that I would answer Marion's questions quite honestly and without embellishment, whatever they were. We found ourselves in deep conversation and I enjoyed it and I believe Marion did too she told me she didn't want to stop she was enjoying it so much and I felt the same. We had a real meeting point and it was a pleasure but most of all Dementia didn't feel at all present just laughter and interest.

I also worked with Vic sometimes, although I always felt he was very well supported by his wife Kate and their grown-up children, Toby and Jo and that they were his voice. Vic liked to observe and spoke very quietly. I think he preferred unobtrusive support which is what I tried to give him. He enjoyed nice hellos and goodbyes and appreciation of Sue's gluten free cakes, which he absolutely loved.

I think we have to find a way in and in some cases it takes a bit longer it is like any friendship. We have to find out what gives a person pleasure are they someone who loves attention as Len did and capable of telling a story or a joke to full effect? I also think by offering support it may be possible for participants to do more than they would normally do, remember more and make friends with others.

Through our observations, debriefs and records which are completed after each session we are all made aware of those people in the group who are unhappy, perhaps not well, struggling a bit and this enables us to keep an eye on them. Sometimes we all get frustrated and upset and people with dementia are subject to bad days. Looking out for these signs makes us more effective.

We need to be aware of preferences too. Some people will enjoy theatre whereas some would rather tell a story, sing a song. It is important to try to make the sessions as happy as possible and to encourage the carers to continue at home what we have begun in the session. The scrapbooks are a lasting memory and can be referred to many times.

I think it is important that we never tire of hearing the same story over again. There is a pleasure for Mary in retelling her stories of her days as a nanny and this contributes to her enjoyment of the sessions.

We need to aim to make the content of the sessions as exciting as possible. Filling our minds with sounds, music, words/poetry, movement/dance and surprises. This keeps everyone on his or her toes and there is no room for complacency.

It is also important that we can gently divert conversation and keep on track so that the session does not lose its cohesion. This has to be handled with care. Unwieldy conversations can take time and people can become restless.

It is essential that there is good communication and that everyone feels included. We had several deaf people in the group who couldn't catch everything that was said and we learnt how to bring them into the conversation by talking directly to the person with hearing loss and retelling someone's experience, so nothing was lost.

Page V

Clothes and dressing up can produce wonderful memories. The 'wedding' session was all embracing allowing everyone in the room to be part of a special occasion. For the Bride and Groom it is rather like reliving the moment as it was for Vivienne and Hyam.

Joining together inevitably brings everyone closer. Noticeably when the course had finished we all felt the loss of it. This was made worse when Victor died just a few days later.

How to work with family carers in a supportive way which helps them to enjoy the sessions and build their confidence and skill.

I have been very aware that carers are often exhausted when they first arrive and in some cases the relationship between the carer and the person with Dementia can be a bit strained but it has been rewarding to see how this changed during the 12 sessions.

I worked quite closely with Lucy who was finding caring for her Mother very difficult and was extremely exhausted by the situation. It was important to give Lucy time to talk about what life as a carer was like and to explore possible solutions that might provide her with some time for herself and her interests. I was aware of the pressures Lucy was under and how easy it might be to feel completely overstretched.

Standing away from the person you are caring for is important. This occurred when the carers had private meetings with Pam to discuss any issues. It was good for the cared for person as well. Sometimes carers worked alongside other people rather than those they knew well which gave a new perspective

The mutual support the carers were able to give each other seemed important too. Some of them knew each other through other activities and were friendly faces for each other. The carers could rely on us to engage with their charges which meant that while they were with us they were no longer solely responsible. I think that to offer a happy full afternoon, one where you could enjoy yourself and relax must be a huge support and a relief

The course offers support for both the carers and the people with Dementia. The carers are encouraged to join in all the activities and for instance Kate, Vic's wife had a great deal of fun. Her love of dancing came to the surface; something she had not done for a long time and that was directly related to the course.

The carers were invited to keep scrapbooks and the continuation of this activity throughout the week was encouraged. The joint involvement with the scrapbooks meant that new conversations and discoveries took place too. The carers learnt new things about their family member and this had a knock on effect on conversations at home. They may have also glimpsed what they were like when they were much younger. Perhaps when they were going out on their first dates or to the cinema. Apparently Vic wore a wonderful David Bowie hat on his nights out!

There was an opportunity to express feelings for each other perhaps something that doesn't happen very often. To say why you love and admire someone in front of a group of people is both brave and touching. To be thanked for being a great wife, daughter, son, brother etc. is very positive.

Page VI

Carers have an opportunity to observe the participants with Dementia and how they respond to different circumstances, which must provide a valuable insight into what may be possible in the future. They are also able share their hopes and fears with other like-minded families which provides valuable support and removes feelings of isolation. This can only be experienced as a bonus.

I think the simple answer to how to work with family carers is to ensure that you offer them support to explore new things that they or their charges might like to do. To enable them to make discoveries about each other and provide opportunities to take time out for a little while. There is comfort in knowing you are not alone.

It is important to encourage full participation. Lucy, Mary's daughter and carer was a model at one stage and Vic's daughter too and together they demonstrated a pretend walk on a catwalk. For that moment they had returned to the days of their 20's. This was during a 'what we did session'. Looking back overtime and remembering the past together is a sharing activity and it seems to take one away from the present day anxiety that you both might be feeling. Understanding, supporting, caring, sharing are things that RYCT manage easily. It offers a role reversal albeit for a short time for the carers of those with Dementia.

Humour and friendship s an important part of life and it was very evident during the 12 weeks of RYCT. It made all things possible!

Angela Wright – RYCT assignment – March 2017

Our plan for our first RYCT session as group leaders!

Programme for 'Winter Warmers' 16/01/2017 session 9

Welcome back after the Christmas Holidays, and outlining what this session is about.

Recap on the last session 'The Next Generation – Babies and Children session 8

Talk about ways – old and new – to keep warm in the winter (Examples: hot water bottles, long thermal underwear, flannel sheets, hats scarves, earmuffs, draft stoppers, layered clothing.....

Warm up – acting out ways of keeping warm. Chopping wood, putting on furry slippers, snuggling under a woollen throw....

Sing a song 'Button up your overcoat' and 'Baby it's cold outside'

One of us to read Winter-Time poem by Robert Louis Stevenson

Divide into small groups with our squares and chat

Feedback to the circle by one member of the group. Whoever feeds back will lay the group's squares in the centre of the circle. When all the squares are laid out they will form a large blanket/collage.

Making our 'Winter Warmer' drink - Mulled spiced apple juice

We will lay out the ingredients for our Mulled, spiced apple drink on trays on two tables. The visitors will be invited to sit at the tables and talk about the food they enjoy in winter and activities they may have enjoyed activities such as French knitting, cat's cradle, crochet etc.. They will also be invited to talk about the ingredients for the drink, perhaps discuss their own experience of spices and making their own hot drinks and warming food and take turns to place the ingredients in a cooking pot which we will pass round.

With our hot drink we will serve cake that has been warmed in the oven. Ordinary tea will also be available.

After tea we will sing a number of songs tea for two-food glorious food, a spoonful of sugar.

David to compose and read his poem.

Recap on today's session.



MULLED SPICED APPLE JUICE

Serves 4

2 cloves

2 star anise

6 crushed cardamom pods

A shard of cinnamon

10 juniper berries

4 black peppercorns

750ml apple juice

Peel of 1 orange minus pith

400ml water

50g sugar

Method

1 Heat all spices in a large pan until they begin to caramelize. When they do, empty the bottle of juice into the pan along with the orange peel.

2 Add the water and sugar, then bring to a gentle simmer. Keep the juice at a constant temperature of 60C/140F.

Baby it's cold outside

I really can't stay (but baby, it's cold outside)
I've got to go away (but baby, it's cold outside)

This evening has been (been hoping that you'd drop in)
So very nice (I'll hold your hands, they're just like ice)

My mother will start to worry (beautiful what's your hurry?)
My father will be pacing the floor (listen to the fireplace roar)

So really I'd better scurry (beautiful please don't hurry)
But maybe just a half a drink more (put some records on while I pour)

The neighbours might think (baby, it's bad out there)
Say what's in this drink? (no cabs to be had out there)

I wish I knew how (your eyes are like starlight now)
To break this spell (I'll take your hat, your hair looks swell)

I ought to say, no, no, no sir (mind if I move in closer?)
At least I'm gonna say that I tried (what's the sense in hurtin' my pride?)

I really can't stay (oh baby don't hold out)
But baby, it's cold outside

I simply must go (but baby, it's cold outside)
The answer is no (but baby, it's cold outside)

Your welcome has been (how lucky that you dropped in)
So nice and warm (look out the window at this dawn)

My sister will be suspicious (gosh your lips look delicious)
My brother will be there at the door (waves upon the tropical shore)

My maiden aunts mind is vicious (gosh your lips are delicious)
But maybe just a cigarette more (never such a blizzard before)

I've gotta get home (but baby, you'd freeze out there)
Say lend me a coat (it's up to your knees out there)

You've really been grand (I thrill when you touch my hand)
But don't you see? (how can you do this thing to me?)

There's bound to be talk tomorrow (think of my lifelong sorrow)
At least there will be plenty implied (if you got pneumonia and died)

I really can't stay (get over that old out)
Baby, it's cold
Baby, it's cold outside