

Connecting with Dementia:

VETERAN-CENTERED CARE THROUGH ACTIVITIES

Topics We'll Explore:

- About the WI Veterans Home in King
- Using Personal History & Preferences to Drive Engagement
- Honoring Veteran Identity Through Meaningful Activities
- Personalized, Purposeful Activities
- Effective Approaches & Hands-On Techniques
- Tools That Support Comfort and Connection

Wisconsin Veterans Home at King

- Long-term and rehabilitative care facility
- Residents are referred to as Members
- Located on the Chain O' Lakes in King, WI
- Marden Recreation Center & on-site amenities
- Specialized memory care unit with courtyard



Built in 1887



Alley
5 Bar



Band Stand in
the Park





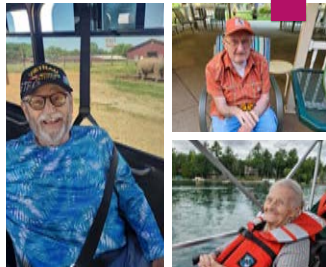
Chapel

Secured Courtyard



Understanding Dementia

- Dementia affects how the brain processes information
- Changes in communication, behavior and understanding
- Skills and abilities can fluctuate daily
- What looks like "behavior" is often an unmet need
- Our job is to adapt – not expect them to



Getting to know the Person

- Learn about past jobs, roles, and daily routines
- Identify hobbies, interests, and favorite activities
- Understand family roles and relationships
- Recognize cultural, religious, and personal values
- Music and sensory preferences
- Favorite meals, traditions, and food preferences

Knowing the Veteran's Story

- Military branch, role, and experiences
- Understand how military service shaped their identity
- Recognize both pride and possible trauma
- Avoid assumptions
- Use their story to guide connection and activities

Using Personal History to Guide Activities

- Past jobs and daily routines
- Hobbies, interests, and meal preferences
- Family and relationships
- Religion and culture
- Music and sensory

Scenario 1

- ▶ You have a new admission to the special care unit. You ask the member if he'd like to go fishing. He says "Yes, I'd love to fish off the dock." You take him down to the lake, but as you begin to bring him towards the pontoon boat, he suddenly starts yelling "NO! NO! NO!".
 - ▶ Why do you think he reacted this way?

Scenario 2

- ▶ A member asked what the activities are for the day. You tell her, "It's the Christmas season, so we're singing carols and watching a movie about Santa." She looks disappointed and says she's just going to stay in her room. You also notice that she continues to turn down holiday-themed activities.
 - ▶ Why do you think she chose not to participate?



Veteran Focused Activities

- ____ Veteran Service Organizations
- ____ Veteran Events and Holidays
- ____ Military Music and sing-alongs
- ____ Code Red, White and Blue/ Amazing Grace

Adapting Group Activities

Interest-based:

fishing, sports, cars, cards, dice, word games, woodworking, crafts

Music-based:

music therapy, entertainment, sing-alongs, and karaoke

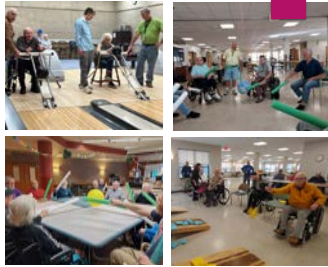
Purposeful & familiar life activities:

cooking, gardening, cleaning, exercise, reminiscing



Movement & Engagement in Dementia

- Supports brain function and mood
- Reduces restlessness and agitation
- Encourages social interaction and connection
- Balloon volleyball, bowling, kickball, chair exercises, & more



Effective Approaches & Techniques

- Approach from the front (within their field of vision)
- Be mindful of positioning and range of motion
- Speak slowly and calmly
- Use tone and body language to support communication
- Keep conversations simple (short phrases, yes/no questions)
- Use names to build connection
- Focus on abilities rather than limitations



Scenario 3

- You have a member who is mostly nonverbal and in the later stages of Alzheimer's. At times, she reaches down towards the floor and asks, "Where's my baby?" You offer her a baby doll to hold but she throws it to the ground.
- What do you think she might be looking for?

Scenario 4

- You have a member in the lobby, moving around in his wheelchair, yelling out in fear. He's visibly distressed, saying things like "they're all over the table" and starts swatting at the air and hitting the table.
- What do you think is going on here? What might he be seeing or experiencing?

Scenario 5

- You have a resident who talks about growing up on a farm. She paces near the window, looking outside and says things like "Spring is the busy season" and "I have to take care of the farm". You can tell she's feeling anxious.
- How could we help her feel more comfortable?

Scenario 6

- ▶ You have a member who has refused to have his hair cut for the last year. He's sitting in the lobby of the unit, and you need to attempt to get him to the barber. You know he often refuses and becomes agitated when asked about getting his hair cut.
- ▶ How would you approach this situation?

Scenario 7

- ▶ A member tells you he misses his wife and often talks about how they used to go to polka parties together. So you invite him to a live polka band event later that day and he declines.
- ▶ Why might he be saying no? What's an alternative?



Sensory – Based
Engagement for
Advanced Needs

Engagement
Senses
Awareness
Approach
Connection

Sensory & Comfort Tools

- Weighted/ warm blankets
- Fidget blankets & muffs
- Rummaging boxes, lock boards
- Photo albums & memory boxes



Companionship & Emotional Support Tools


- JOY FOR ALL companion pets
- Baby dolls
- Stuffed animals
- Pet visits



Environment & Social Connection

- Lighting, noise, calm spaces
- Tone of environment
- Social connection for nonverbal members
- Hearing a voice, feeling presence





Music & Dementia

- Improves mood, reduces anxiety, increases engagement
- Supports memory and emotional connection
- Most effective when personalized
- Tools: iPods, neck speakers, & adaptive instruments

Aromatherapy

- Benefits of essential oils
- Methods of Use
- Consider safety and sensitivities
- Different kinds of oils



Aromatherapy Oils

- Lavender -Stress reduction
- Lemon/Sweet Orange -Energy booster
- Bergamot -Anxiety reduction
- Peppermint- Energy focus/ pain reduction



What Matters Most

Focus on the person, not the diagnosis

Build activities around their life and identity

Adapt to what they CAN do

Your approach matters as much as the activity

Create connection, comfort and purpose



Thank You for Coming to our Presentation



*Remember to Thank a Veteran for
Their Service*



WVVA
