

Dianne Powell
Meaningful
Activities



Interactions and Activities Throughout the Stages.

- Meaningful activities and interactions change as the person living with dementia change. In this class we will explore ways to understand when and how to stay engaged and provide activities for the person living with dementia that promote the best experiences.
- Participants will discover the cues that help them know when to change up the interactions and activities for their person living with dementia.
- Participants will be able to choose from a host of activities that best fit the needs and interests of the person living with dementia.
- Participants will be able to engage with the person living with dementia for creative ways to interact for the best outcomes.

Let's do a quick review.

PLWD are doing the best they can

It is a progressive brain degenerative disease of which, at current, there is no FDA approved good treatment or cure. While it is a disease, we need to address it as a disability and focus on what the PLWD can do rather than what they cannot do.

- If a person becomes unable to walk, we find adaptive ways to assist them to continue to participate in their normal activities, such adaptive means might be a w/c, ramps, lower countertops etc.... we need to think about implementing adaptive ideas for PLWD as well.
- As Bill Thomas said, "the 3 plaques of nursing homes are **loneliness, helplessness, and boredom**" and I might add **helplessness**. As Marie Montessori said, "**everything you do for me, you take away from me.**"
- Knowing the PLWD interests and skills, past occupation is important to creating meaningful activities.
- We need to stay flexible and fluid as the PLWD changes, we must change to meet their needs. Activities do not need to be planned or over monitored, let the PLWD take lead.

Best tips

- Task segmenting – will need to continually become more peeled down to simpler steps. An example is to dry the dishes... segments down to 5 steps. Going to the sink, holding the towel, picking up the dish, rubbing it dry, placing the dish in a cabinet or down on the countertop.
- Writing notes that either the person makes or assists to make to have ready to refer back to, even with pictures to help.
- The PLWD must stay involved with all aspects of the activity, from planning to implementing. If it is something they feel ownership and interest, even responsibility in completing, then it will be more successful.
- Even with your best intentions and work something may not be successful for your PLWD, trial and error and just a part of the journey and not to be considered a failure on your part or the PLWD part. If this happens then evaluate the situation and revamp or totally scrap and go on to another project.

Examples

A) Jan was a stay-at-home mom and homemaker and was active in her church and community groups before being diagnosed with Alzheimer's type dementia. Since then, she has become isolated and rarely goes out, her family is overwhelmed with her constant pacing and wringing of hands and her repetitive statements of "what do we do now" etc.... When they try to get her to sit and watch TV or put puzzles together with them, she quickly becomes frustrated and stands up to start pacing, again demonstrating signs of anxiety.

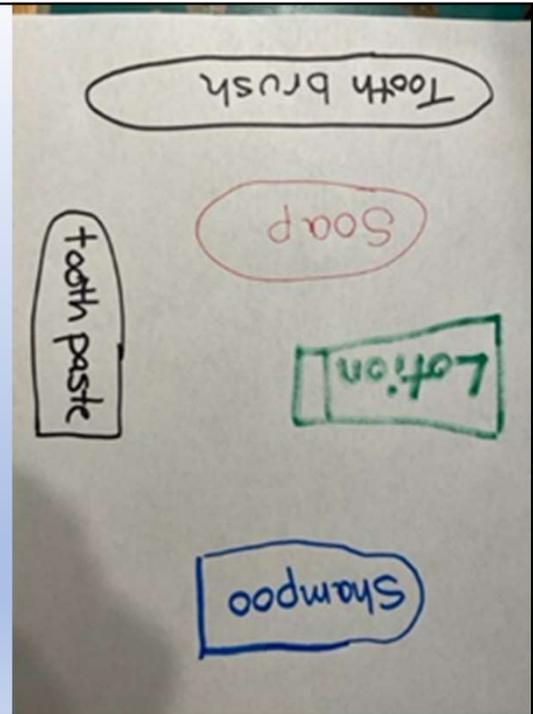
- Do you think Jan feels bored or useless? It is human need to feel needed and helpful. Jan lived her whole life doing and giving to others and now we expect her to sit quietly and have others do for her? That is not a reasonable request for such a person.
- What activities can Jan do that is fulfilling and is actually helping others?

Ideas:

- 1.) There are so many good charities out there, pick one that might be near and dear to the PLWD. You could even contact them to see what needs you might be able to adapt for the PLWD to engage in to help.
- a.) Pick a project with your PLWD and talk about ways to help. Example: Homeless shelters and women's shelters are always needing hygiene kits.
- b.) You may have relatives or friends, some even that live distances away but will ask, what they can do to help you. Ask them to either send you sample size hygiene products or ask them to order them online like from Amazon and have them shipped to you.
- c.) Have the PLWD help draw a diagram or template for each item needed for the hygiene kit.

Template and notes

Ask the PLWD to place each item on the template. When the template is full, place the items in a ziplock bag and place it in a pile. This give the PLWD a visual of each step and they can see the progress they are making.



Match to the template

While doing the activity, talk about how the charity of your choice will truly appreciate it and how what they are doing is so helpful to those in need.



Modify to interests and ability

- f.) This can be modified for: Veterans, young children or babies, teachers, or animal shelters and more, depending on what the PLWD has as an interest.
- g.) When the kits are all assembled talk about how to donate, even just driving to the location and having someone come out to the car to accept the donation and thank the PLWD. Emotional memories are stored in a different part of the brain, and this should be very satisfying for the PLWD.
- h.) You could modify this activity for making bags for birthday party gift bags or wedding gift bags, or perhaps Christmas Child shoe box kits.

Example:

- B.) Marie had a worked at JC Penney for 15 years after her children were grown. She would display and stock clothing and would work the cash register. Since developing symptoms of dementia Marie becomes anxious every morning telling her daughter that she needed to go to the store and get to work. What meaningful activity might be useful for Marie?
- 1.) We can see that Marie valued her time working at JC Penney and still has a need to feel that usefulness. How can her skills used in that position be used in a meaningful activity?
- 2.) Idea – Many people have jars or loose change just laying around the house. Gather these coins, put them in a bank bag along with a few one- and five-dollar bills.

Adjust to skill level

- 3.) Find a cash drawer such as in the picture. These are available on Marketplace, Amazon, eBay or several other sites for \$15 or less. Dump out the bank bag and place the coins and bills in the individual compartments. If the PLWD finds this difficult, start by placing one of each kind in a compartment and then have them find and match each coin or bill for that compartment.
- 4.) Talk about how this will be helpful to the store or to a neighbor that is having a garage sale and does not have time to sort out a cash drawer.
- 5.) This activity can be done frequently – just keep the items on hand and ready.



Organize Jewelry



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Example

Another activity for Marie might be to sort and mark clothing and items for a church rummage sale or friend, neighbor, family garage sale.

- 1.) Put out the word that you are looking for items to mark and fold and put into boxes for a garage sale, no doubt you will have several offers.
- 2.) Talk to the PLWD and discuss how a neighbor needs their help and that they are the perfect person to do this because of their experience. Talk about how and what you will do to help. (by the way, try not to ask yes or no questions)
- 3.) Have tags or stickers and a marker and lay out the item and mark it and fold it into stacks of like items or sizes. It is not important that you do a certain amount or that it is perfect, it is just the act of doing. Talk about how helpful this is for the young mother that does not have time to do this and how much it means to her.
- 4.) You may not always have a garage sale coming up (i.e., winter months), in these cases you can ask for things people might want to take to donate to Goodwill or DAV, you can use these to organize and fold and put in boxes to donate. You can also have what I call an emergency kit ready to go when the PLWD becomes anxious. Just have a box of various clothes or items that can be folded and marked and put back in the box.... You can always take off the stickers and unfold and put back in the box for the next time.

It can feel difficult to find engaging activities for men.

- 1.) Into golfing? Have people bring golf balls that were found in the ponds or tall grasses and wash and dry them and place like kinds into bags to donate to youth golf programs. Set up a putting range at home and practice. Go to a driving range and watch or even swing at a few. Look at old photos and reminisce.
- 2.) Fishing a favorite pass time? Pinterest and YouTube are full of simple lures and bobbers you can make with simple items from the dollar store. Contact associations such as Cheney Lake Assn that sponsor Outdoor Kansas Kids Days and ask if you can have a few poles that need some rehab and clean and restring them. Talk about how this will really help youngsters that otherwise might not have the opportunity to fish. Remember to keep it simple and to task segment and to write out what you are doing any why and continue to refer back to the note as needed. Perhaps you could get a tackle box and arrange the bobbers and lures.

Other ideas for men

- Sanding and assembling simple wooden toys to donate is another good idea.
- Get several pad-locks and keys and match up the keys to the pad-lock.
- Ask around, you can find a small engine part such as a lawn mower engine, give him some tools and let him have at it. Of course, cover the table with a good plastic tablecloth first. Tell them, they were going to throw it away but maybe you can see what you think first so they do not feel the pressure to make it usable again.

For the LTC Communities

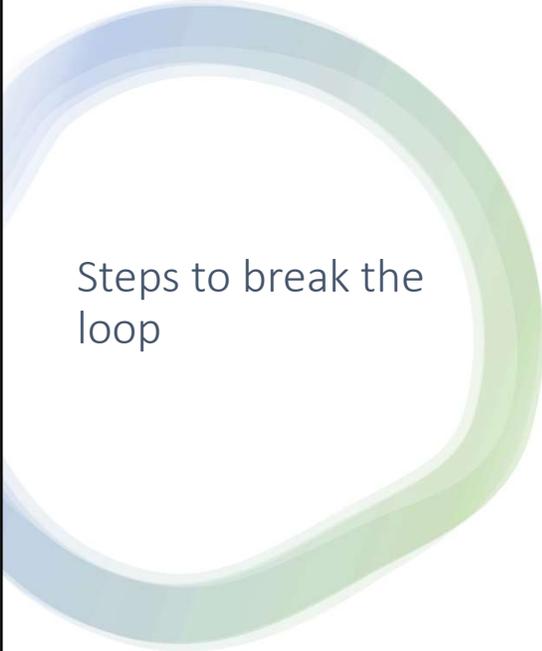
The nursing home where I was the DON, we had matching hats for all the men with the logo "Lazy Bones Club" they would meet 1x a week for coffee and a person from the community would come in and talk and bring something in such as a small steam engine, a street race car and all the men would go out and look at it and see the engine and listen to it roar. Sometimes they would load up in the van and go out to look at the wheat and then stop by McDonald's drive through for a shake. We never had problems with attendance.



Use Music in Every Way Possible
When doing activities or even as an activity, move to the music. Make sure to use the music they like.

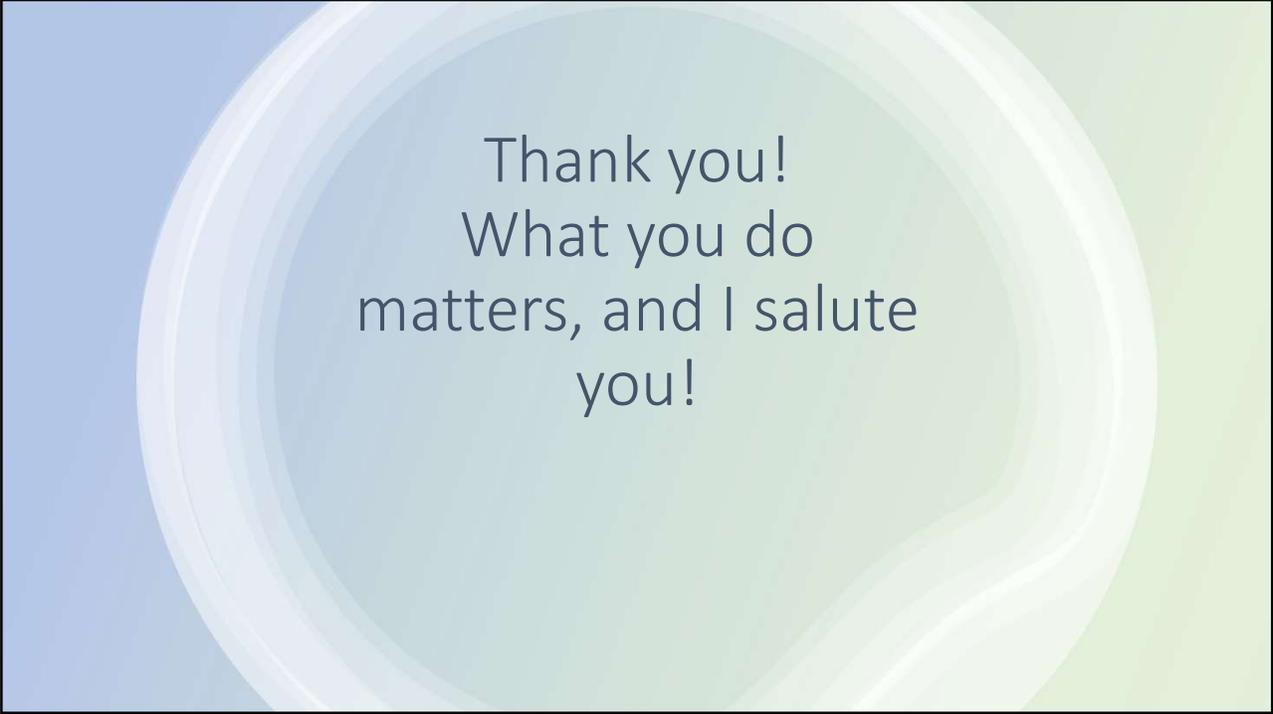


Make your own kits to have on hand and use when needed



Steps to break the loop

- 1.) Repeat what they say using the same inflection.
- 2.) Validate their feeling by stating how they must feel.
- 3.) Be the hero - I will help
- 4.) Tell me about.....
- 5.) Get up and go to another setting – outside if at all possible.
- 6.) Do not attempt to redirect until you connect and break the loop.
- 7.) Substitute not subtract
- 8.) When the loop is broken – must replace with meaningful activities.
- 9.) Remember sometimes you need to just let it go and go get some ice cream.
- Kozy Wash-up – avoid the stress



Thank you!
What you do
matters, and I salute
you!