



The Art of Reminiscence

For most people, sitting around recalling the good ole' days with family and friends is therapeutic and enjoyable. Sharing stories about childhood, vacations, raising a family, and holiday get-togethers is a way to pass along family traditions and memories to the next generation. Recall the last time you got together with your extended family; at some point during the visit, there was probably a conversation or two that revolved around reminiscing. No matter your age, reminiscing is a way to stay connected with your loved ones.



For a person living with memory loss, reminiscing holds greater meaning and purpose. Reminiscence Therapy aims to reach the memories that reside in the viable regions of the brain of a person living with dementia. The areas of the brain that store long-term memories are the last areas to be affected by the disease's progression. Thus, loved ones living with memory loss will usually remember much more about their younger years than they will about what they did earlier in the week. According to the article, *The Benefits of Reminiscence Therapy for Seniors*, there are numerous benefits of reminiscence therapy. From an increased ability to communicate to reestablishing life's meaning through connecting to the past, reminiscing provides relief from boredom and can improve the relationship between the caregiver and person living with memory loss. Although reminiscence is usually associated with a person living with dementia, anyone can benefit from engaging in reminiscing. Read on to learn more about the art of reminiscence.

Incorporate Music

A person living with memory loss can feel isolated from the world. Music has the power to draw them back, giving them a way to express their emotions and connect with others. Rhythmic responses require little to no cognitive or mental processing, yet it still stimulates many parts of the brain. Hearing familiar songs allows a person with memory loss to tap into memories associated with the song or that time in their life. When using music to reminisce with your loved one, select songs and genres from their earlier adult years. Many older adults spent their teenage years dancing with their sweethearts at dance halls. Play favorite songs by Frank Sinatra or Dean Martin and reminisce with your loved one about first dates or how they met their spouse.

Engage the Sense of Smell

Have you ever noticed how a particular aroma can elicit such a powerful memory? Smells are routed through the olfactory bulb, or the smell-analyzing region in the brain. The olfactory bulb is closely connected to the amygdala and hippocampus, the regions in the brain that are responsible for memory storage and emotion. Smelling certain aromas while reminiscing enhances the experience for the person living with memory loss. Spend an afternoon baking your loved one's favorite dessert with them. Linger in the kitchen to smell the aroma produced by the oven and reminisce about how they learned to bake or memories they may have of their mother cooking. Encourage your loved one to smell their favorite lotion or aftershave before applying it to their skin to prompt memories. Visit aromatic places, such as a florist or mechanic shop, and reminisce about gardening or your loved one's first car.

Utilize Props

Just as aromas can prompt memories, certain props that are familiar to your loved one can also trigger memories and enhance reminiscing. Put together a basket of props that you can explore and reminisce about with your loved one. Did your dad always wear a shirt and tie to the office? Include a few ties in the basket and reminisce about his first job or big promotion. Was your mom always busy in the kitchen? Include an apron and wooden spoons and reminisce with her about holiday meal preparations or Sunday dinners. Other ideas include favorite sport's team memorabilia, hobby-themed baskets, or seasonal-themed baskets.

Let Them Lead

Lastly, when reminiscing with your loved one, it's important that you allow them to lead the conversation. Start the conversation with an open-ended question or phrase, such as "Tell me about the time when..." Then, give your loved one time and space to respond. A person living with memory loss needs extra time to process and formulate a response. If your loved one doesn't quite recall a particular event the way that you do, or if they paint a prettier picture of their childhood than you know to be true avoid correcting them. The beauty of reminiscing is that there is no right or wrong response.

Whether your loved one has been recently diagnosed with memory loss, or is in the middle to late stages of dementia, [Visiting Angels of Denver](#) understands that it can be an overwhelming time. This can be especially true if you are trying to honor your loved one's wishes to remain living in their own home yet are struggling with how to keep your loved one safe and secure when you're not available. Fortunately, you are not alone in this journey. Visiting Angels offers professional in-home dementia care of seniors. Our compassionate caregivers are ready and available to provide experienced in-home care for your loved one, while treating them with the kindest and respect they deserve. [Give us a call](#) today to set up a free in-home consultation and learn more about how we can help you navigate this journey.

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