

Games for People Living with Dementia

Games are one of the oldest forms of social interaction. Be it board games, ball games, or card games - games bring people together in a way that is stimulating and fun.

Benefits of Playing Games

Game playing in long term care facilities & nursing homes offers clients much more than just entertainment. The impact that playing games has on the health and well-being of individuals has been well documented.

Playing games provides an important source of relaxation, socialization and mental stimulation. It helps with coordination and dexterity, and fosters cooperation.

Other benefits that may be observed in clients engaged in games include:

- Alertness
- Creativity
- Mindfulness
- Reminiscing
- Laughter
- Changed demeanour
- Cooperative behaviour

Adapting Games to Match Abilities

The challenge for Activity Coordinators is to find the right games to match the skills and interests of clients with the stage of dementia they are going through.

Adapting and modifying games for seniors is necessary for all sorts of different reasons. As well as for those living with dementia, games need to be modified for those who use wheelchairs and those with impaired vision or sensory loss.

So keep it simple; you will know best how to modify games for your clients. Don't be hard on yourself, if something is not working out as desired, change course. When playing games, it is important not to over-estimate what your clients are capable of, the objective is to enjoy the activity and focus on the experience while connecting with others and/or learning a new skill. However, don't underestimate your clients either! Very often they will surprise you with their hidden abilities.

7 Games to Adapt for People Living with Dementia

The following activities will hopefully give you some new ideas to add to your Activity Program to

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vitalize your clients with laughter, enjoyment, and socialization.

Jenga



Jenga is a wooden block stacking game promoting physical skills. Players build a tower and take turns removing a block from the tower and balancing it on top of tower, making it increasingly unstable. It is easy to set up and suits most people. The game finishes when the tower falls apart. Adapt the game according to the ability of clients e.g. make the tower shorter and faster to rebuild.

Qwirkle



Colourful game similar to dominos. The game's rules are to match colours and shapes promoting tactical manoeuvres and planned strategies.

Say Anything

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This game is an ideal way to socialise with new clients. It consists of a series of cards with questions and dry eraser boards on which to answer them. The questions are open-ended which means they express personal taste and interpretation, instead of being influenced by feelings. You may adapt the game to suit the needs of clients e.g. by having a designated person to write answers.

Vintage Spinning Tops



Many clients will remember them and will be pleased to wind them up and play as they once did in their youth. Try to get the traditional wooden ones with a short iron tip and string.

Quoits

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Ancient game to be played indoors or outdoors. It consists of six rope rings and a wooden spike. Players sit back three metres (or less) from spike and throw rings. The person with the most rings on the spike is the winner. This game is a good one to improve hand-eye coordination.

Bean Bags



Versatile game ideal to target, toss, juggle, clap & catch, or indoor shuffleboard. They can be homemade in all shapes and sizes or purchased online. [Bean Bag Toss Game](#)

Charades

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A fun game that can be adapted for seniors. All word cards contain an acting word or words to be acted silently to the opposite team. Start with simple words and graduate to themes such as TV shows and famous movies. [See instructions and download templates on Golden Carers.](#)

15 More Game Ideas for People Living with Dementia

- Parachute Game - Sew scarves together to make a large square or circle. Participants hold around the edge and wave it up and down to keep a balloon in the air.
 - Table Pong ([Beer Pong](#) without the beer!)
 - [Noodle Hockey](#)
 - Quick fire quizzes - Words beginning with...
 - Karaoke with large screen display of words
 - [Bingo](#)
 - [Musical Bingo](#)
 - [Whiteboard Word Games](#) (write a word and then make smaller words out of it)
 - [The Price is Right](#)
 - [Memory Tray](#)
 - [Money Counting Games](#)
 - [School Days Reminiscing Cards](#)
 - [Balloon Games](#)
 - [Play Dough Crafts](#)
 - [Pairing & Sorting Games](#)
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Help us add to this list of games for people living with dementia!

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What games have you found to work well?