

Running a Dance Reminiscence Session



The health benefits of dancing for seniors don't depend on doing a specific type of dance. A review of multiple studies on dancing and aging found that any style of dance can help maintain or even improve muscle strength, balance, endurance, and other forms of physical health in older adults.

Reminiscence is an activity where people recall and share their memories and the emotions attached to those memories. Dance and movement coupled with photographs is an excellent method to stimulate and can be a very sociable activity for care home residents/older adult groups and people living with dementia and can help improve self-confidence and sense of wellbeing.

Always use a qualified Dance Movement Therapist to lead these sessions, however for any movement activities. Regular physical activity, even chair-based, can greatly improve both the physical and cognitive capacities of older adults, and people living with dementia. Regular sessions of dance and movement can hugely benefit well-being and quality of life for these communities.

The importance of the room in which the session takes place, the time of the activity and supporting staff involved. Each of these elements can greatly help or hinder the session and what participants are able to get out of the experience.

- The Room - needs to be sufficiently airy so that when moving the participants do not over heat. For the group to be able to sit in something of circle, to be able to talk to each other without creating too many sub-groups so that the facilitators can still lead the session.
- The Time -consult with care workers on the best time of the day to hold the session . Though this could be quite different from location to location, it is worth checking out in terms of each setting. Some felt late morning was best i.e. 11am morning, or about 2pm, after lunch and after a bit of a break. Do not do the session directly after lunch.
- The Support Staff - the manner in which support staff engage with and view the

session could hugely impact the group. Staff need to feel comfortable enough to participate, just like the participants themselves, neither forcing nor standing back. When everyone participates all in the room feel safe enough to engage and can enjoy and make the most of the activity.

An example of a session 1 hour long:

A.

WARM---UP

Each of the movement sessions should involve a gentle warm---up to prepare the group them for moving as well as help them feel comfortable in the room. This should include a

Type of 'getting to know you' interaction activity to encourage potential linking between participants.

B.

MELODY MAKING

Relevant movement themes to be introduced and participants will be encouraged to build

On them, including actions or movements associated with the tunes. They will also be

Encouraged to sing along while moving.

C. DUETING

Interaction is such an important part of these activities and one that brings great rewards to those participating. Respecting the different levels of physical ability, Members will be guided to move/dance with each other in duets or larger groups, aided by scarves or other props. Participants with more mobility will be able to Change seats to support change of groupings when beneficial and keeping an atmosphere of playfulness and inter---change.

D. SETTling (Cool down)

The last part of the session should involve movements and music that 'bring us home' to a quieter, and more settled place in themselves. Participants should be guided to take a movement memory or sensation away with them from the session.

A few tips:

- Make sure that the sessions are appropriately targeted
- All participants can be active from a sitting or standing position.
- Use a mixture of movement and include chair-based movement
- A mixture of movement and old photographs work well
- Encourage all participants to always remain comfortable as they participate.

- Encourage all participants to be involved as they prefer, moving, listening, watching.
- Encourage everyone present to be involved, whatever that may look like.
- Remind all present to respect themselves and each other.
- Offer to move with individual participants however if they do not respond, respect their wishes and move on.
- Any music can be good, as long as it makes them move comfortably