

# Running a Reminiscence Session

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Reminiscence is an activity where people recall and share their memories and the emotions attached to those memories. Using objects and photographs to stimulate and share memories can be a very sociable activity for care home residents and can help improve self-confidence and sense of wellbeing.

Top tips:

1. Reminiscence works better one to one or in small groups. It allows everyone to hear, listen, see and touch. It is better to hold several smaller, shorter sessions where the participants get an opportunity to contribute and really engage, rather than one large session where it is difficult for the residents to participate meaningfully. In order to keep people's attention we recommend no longer than 1 ½ hrs.
2. Sitting around a table allows everyone to be able to see the objects and photographs, to hear each other speaking and identify objects/photographs that they'd like to talk about. This increases feelings of belonging and active participation.
3. Using your local knowledge helps get conversation started. If you know where your participants were born, where they worked, what they enjoy and don't enjoy doing, this knowledge can help get people talking – don't be afraid to use it.
4. During successful reminiscence sessions residents are focused and engaged in a relaxed and quiet space. Although this might not last very long, it is important to keep other possible distractions, eg tea & biscuits, medication, to the start or the end of the session.
5. It's best to try and stick to one theme for a session, eg, domestic, schooldays, holidays, where people used to work etc
6. It's best to bring a stimulus. Objects aren't essential - photographs/ newspapers/magazines are also very useful. If you have relevant audio or visual resources you might also consider using these, though do bear in mind any disabilities your participants might have. Smells and different textures are excellent for people who have sensory impairments. Perhaps you might like to ask people to bring objects or textiles relevant to the discussion?
7. It's a good idea to have some questions ready to ask, to help people focus their memories. Sometimes people don't feel comfortable coming forward with

their own memories, but may feel more comfortable if they are asked a question.

8. Try not to ask questions that can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no'. Eg instead of asking "did you enjoy school?" ask "What do you remember about your school?" "Can you tell me where you went to school" Good conversation starters are:

"Where did you grow up?"

"Where did you used to go on a Saturday night?"

"What did your Father/Mother do for work?"

"Where did you go on holiday?"

"Where was good to go shopping"

9. Try and make sure one person is talking at a time. This gives everyone the chance to speak and to listen to other people's memories. It is important that no one person dominates the conversation – particularly you.
10. Don't worry if the conversation goes off from the original topic. The most important part of reminiscence is that people are enjoying themselves and being sociable with other people

11. Have fun!