

Memory Box

For a person with Alzheimer's or other dementias, helping them connect with their past and life experiences can create positive experiences, help reduce stress and improve quality of life. Everyone has life experiences, stories to tell and items we may have that connect us to these happy and comforting memories. The sense of touch can trigger memories in a way that other forms of communication cannot. The Memory "box" items can be a great conversation starter or a way to help connect with the person and understand what was important to them. The Memory "box" items can also be a way to engage the person or help comfort the person when they need to be calmed.

To stimulate tactile memories for a family member with dementia, first figure out what items may hold special significance for that person. Did your loved one play a sport? An instrument? Spend a lot of time in the kitchen? The garden? The workshop? Then collect relevant items in one location so they're easy to pull out when that person needs to be calmed or comforted.

The memory "box" can take a number of forms—maybe a basket, an inexpensive plastic container with Snap-On lid, a designated shelf or drawer, or a shoebox for smaller items. Putting the box together could be a fun, intergenerational activity for your family. Enlist the help of the grandchildren to decorate the box or contribute to the collection.

Have the person with dementia hold each item and encourage that person to share what that object brings to mind, say for example; "tell me about this object, or I wonder what this item means?" You can talk about how it feels—bumpy, smooth, fuzzy, hard—and what memories the person associates with it.

The memory box can include any item that might mean something to the person with dementia:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A baseball/glove/cards• Gardening gloves• Different types of fabric• A favorite article of clothing• A favorite book | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A family heirloom• A stuffed animal• A musical instrument• Tickets for events attended and loved |
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