

Handy idea: Activity Intervention Kits

By Debi Trammell
Activity Director



In my continuing effort to be superwoman, I've found that I am actually not able to leap tall buildings in a single bound and not, unfortunately, able to be four places at one time.

As much as my ego would love me to believe I can do it all alone, my body and brain strongly disagree. So I had a problem.

"As much as my ego would love me to believe I can do it all alone, my body and brain strongly disagree."

Our facility has a number of residents who are either not interested in or not appropriate for large group activities.

This includes some who prefer to pursue independent activities, and some residents whose advanced dementia or Alzheimers Disease precludes them from actively participating.

Some residents who need to be watched closer are kept close to the nurses station but needed some stimulation.

If I wasn't here, or involved in a group activity these residents were pretty much stuck looking at each other. I needed to find a way to meet the needs of this part of our population.

So I had another one of my brilliant ideas (I hope you're laughing at that).

I put together ten kits that any staff member can use with a resident.

Most of them target the dementia/Alzheimer population, but several can be used for those residents who can't sleep, are restless or just plain bored.

It all started with a trip to Wal-Mart where I bought several plastic containers with lids. They varied in size, but none were bigger than a shoebox.

After I had the containers, I was off to the dollar store for the contents.

Each kit contains a laminated instruction and content card, no matter how simple it is.

My goal was to make them easy for any employee to use. I created a colorful sheet to put in each nursing station's book that said:

"The activity intervention kits are now a key part of our facility activity program and have definitely added quality to the life of our residents."

"Activity Intervention Kits are now available in the cabinets behind the Darcy charge nurse desk.

These kits are designed for restless dementia patients, and residents seeking independent activity.

If the first one doesn't work, try another one. Please follow the enclosed instructions and return kits to the cabinet when not in use.

More kits will be coming soon! Please let the Activity Department know what works, and what doesn't!"

The kits are stored in a cabinet behind the nursing station. Easy access to them was a key part of the plan! The kits I've put together so far include:

1. Visual Stimulation Kit

Contents:

- Animal Flashcards
- Landmark Flashcards
- President Flashcards
- Laminated Pictures (from old calendars and/or magazines)

Instructions:

Give Resident the stack of pictures or one pack of cards.

Encourage resident to look through cards and talk about what he/she sees.

If resident is stressed by questions, just allow him/her to quietly browse through the cards.

2. Folding Kit

Contents:

- Basket
- 10 Washcloths

Instructions:

Ask Resident if he/she would like to help fold laundry. Take washcloths out of basket and place in front of Resident.

Let the resident fold and re-fold as long as he/she remains interested. Thank resident for helping.

Before using with another resident, send washcloths to laundry and come to Activities for replacements.

(Intervention kits, cont'd next page)

(Holidays, cont'd)

Here are still more bingo ideas, bingo lottery, intercom bingo, and buddy bingo.

Yes bingo is a favorite of many nursing home residents. You can play it in December or anytime throughout the year. I hope some of the ideas on how to modify the game will be useful to you.

Card games

I mentioned playing card bingo before. Actually using a deck of cards to play a game is a great idea.

There are many card games you can play from simple matching to playing card memory using two of each number or half the deck.

Here are some other ideas.

These activities use a deck of playing cards and are especially good for persons with dementia who love numbers, have worked with numbers, relate to numbers, like to play cards, or have played cards in the past.

Sorting

SORTING the cards: by suit, odd and even numbers, by colors or any original way that might be thought of.

Give the dementia person a number of playing cards (more for those with early dementia).

Two cards for those with significant memory challenges)

Give the dementia person a number of playing cards (more for those with early dementia. Two cards for those with significant memory challenges)

Then show them a card. See if they can pick the matching card. You can see if they can match a sequence of cards.

Pick a number

PICKING a number(s) of the day or week-Start small-pick only one number. Relate the number to something significant-for example if 2 is picked say: *We can remember 2 because we have 2 eyes, arms etc.*

Then when asking them to remember the number periodically throughout the day, say: *It is the number of eyes you have.* Some may remember the number without the cue.

Some may not remember the number but know that a person has 2 eyes. Either way connections are being made in the brain to replace the ones that have been lost.

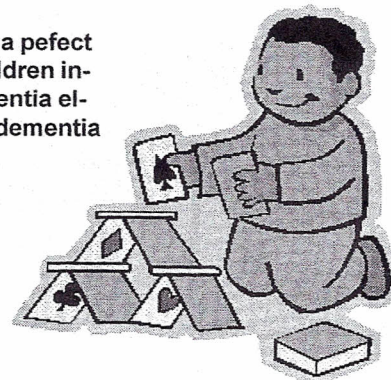


Standard card games

Here are a few suggestions of standard card games that your participants may have played in the past, War, Crazy eights, Old Maid (take 3 of the queens out of the deck), Go Fish, or make up a game.

This is the perfect opportunity to get children involved. Dementia folks love children. However, the children should be educated about dementia.

Using card games is a perfect opportunity to get children involved with your dementia elders. Remember that dementia elders love children.



No matter what games you play, or activities you do, remember to put a positive spin on everything.

Have meaningful dialog throughout the sessions. Conversation is extremely important for persons living at a long term care facility especially those that are memory challenged.

Also make sure to place the emphasis on fun.

You can see, I am sure, that all the activities suggested can be used throughout the year.

So have a happy enjoyable holiday season with many happy activities.

Make sure you place the emphasis on "fun!"



Susan Berg is a Certified Dementia Practitioner, experienced Activities Director, author and educator.

Visit her website at <http://www.alzheimersideas.com> or her blogs at:

<http://activitiesdirector.blogspot.com>

<http://dementiaviews.blogspot.com>

<http://dementiatips.blogspot.com>

(Intervention kits, cont'd)

3. Coloring Kit

Contents:

- Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced Coloring Pages
- Colored Pencils

Instructions:

Let resident pick out a picture to color. Give cues if needed. Praise results, but do not treat resident like a child. Do not use crayons, only color pencils.

4. Treasure Hunt Kit

Contents:

- Unpopped Popcorn
- 10 Poker Chips

Instructions:

Ask resident to dig through the popcorn to find the poker chips. Mix them back in and do it again as long as resident stays interested.

5. Beading Kit

Contents:

- Large Beads
- Shoestrings

Instructions: Hand box to resident and demonstrate how to string beads.

6. Teacher Kit

Contents:

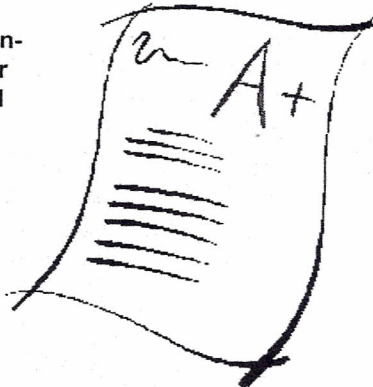
- "Student" worksheets
- Answer Keys
- Mini Whiteboard
- Notepad
- Red Pens, Pencils, Chalk
- Reward Stickers

Instructions:

Offer resident one set of student papers to grade, and matching answer sheet.

Resident can use red pen for corrections and stickers to put on the best ones. Resident may also enjoy writing on the chalkboard or notepad.

Resident-specific kits included one for a former teacher which included worksheets for her to grade.



7. Poker Chip Sorting Kit

Contents:

- Red Poker Chips
- White Poker Chips
- 2 Small Baskets

Instructions:

Dump all chips in large container. Ask resident to put all of the white chips in one basket and the red chips in another. Repeat as often as resident retains interest.

8. Sock Sorting Kit

Contents:

- Mini Laundry Basket
- 22 pairs of colorful
- Children's socks

Instructions:

Option 1: Ask resident to roll socks in matching pairs.

Option 2: (for resident's who may struggle with matching) Ask resident to roll socks into pairs, regardless of whether or not they match.

9. Game Kit

This kit is meant to be used by a staff member and a resident or 2 residents.

Contents:

- Tic Tac Toe
- Hangman
- Checkers
- Playing Cards
- Connect Four
- Dot to Dot
- Pencils

Instructions:

Ask resident to pick a game and give assistance as needed. Have fun!

10. Reading Kit

Contents:

- Current Magazines
- Paperback Books
- Daily Newspaper

Instructions:

Allow resident to choose reading material or choose material to read to resident.

I have plans for many more kits. As I create them, I will rotate kits in and out so the residents (and staff) don't get tired of them.

I also put resident-specific kits together for in-room or independent activities.

In fact, the Teacher Kit was put together for Ms. P., a former elementary school teacher.

Her dementia made it difficult for her to participate in group activities and she constantly tried to get out of her wheelchair, putting her at a great risk for falls.

When presented with the teachers kit, which included completed simple math worksheets from her "students", she sat and marked them with her red pencil.

She commented that "these children didn't study hard enough!"

She also loved the Beading kit and the Visual Stimulation kit.

"Fortunately, it was quickly apparent that using these kits actually saved time because residents were occupied and content."

Staff buys in

The hardest part of any project like this is getting buy-in from the rest of the staff. I admit there was some groaning at first.

Nobody wants to add more to an already full plate.

Fortunately, it was quickly apparent that using these kits actually saved time because residents were occupied and content.

The activity intervention kits are now a key part of our facility activity program and have definitely added quality to the life of our residents.

So let your imagination run wild! You don't need a lot of money to get started, and the pay-back is tremendous.

Happy residents, happy staff – what more could you ask for?

Oh wait! I just had another idea – a spa kit for Activity Directors! Hmm.....

Until next time,
Debi

Debi Trammell is a full time Activity Director at Crestview Court, a 125 bed skilled nursing facility located in Cedar Hill, Texas. She is responsible for activity planning volunteer coordination for an active group of young-minded residents.


Formerly a corporate marketing manager, Debi has been an Activity Professional in long term care for 10 years.

She accidentally stumbled upon the activity profession and found her calling when her best friend asked her to "fill in" while her facility searched for an Activity Director.

She recently completed MEPAP Part 2 and has applied for certification. Future plans include consulting and writing more activity articles.

Debi lives in Texas with her husband, her sixteen year old son and one very mis-behaved dog.

Feel free to contact her at debilynne@gmail.com with questions, comments or article suggestions.



Act in Time to Heart Attack Signs

Heart disease is the top killer of men and women.

Learn the signs of a heart attack and the steps to take if one happens. You can save a life—maybe your own.

Treatments can stop a heart attack in its tracks.

Clot-busting drugs and other artery-opening treatments work best to stop a heart attack if given within 1 hour of the start of symptoms.

Know the warning signs:

- ▲ Discomfort or pain in the center of the chest.
- ▲ Discomfort in the arm(s), back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- ▲ Shortness of breath.
- ▲ Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.

Uncertainty is normal.

Heart attacks are not always sudden and intense. Many start slowly, with only mild pain or discomfort. You may not be sure what's wrong—even if you've had a heart attack. Each heart attack can have different signs. When in doubt, check it out.

Don't delay. Report immediately!

Minutes matter! Don't wait more than a few minutes!

Plan ahead.

- ▲ Learn the warning signs.

American Heart Association
Fighting Heart Disease and Stroke



I won't spread flu to my patients or my family.

Even healthy people can get the flu, and it can be serious.

Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine. This means you.

This season, protect yourself—and those around you—by getting a flu vaccine.

THE FLU ENDS WITH U For more information, visit <http://www.flu.gov>