

SENSORY THERAPY

The period between 3 pm and mealtime is a time when people with Alzheimer's or dementia can often get anxious or start "sundowning". They may want to go home, get their children off the bus or sometimes even go home for dinner with THEIR parents! It is a time when they can really benefit by being redirected and occupied with an activity.

Sensory Therapy is an effective method of reducing anxiety, calming nerves, and providing comfort. For individuals in late stage dementia, seniors typically experience greater declines in reasoning and language, but they still have their senses. Clients use simple activities to occupy their five senses in safe and soothing ways.

You may need to model to your client how to accomplish the task. For example, sit across from them and start sorting coins. Make piles of similar sized coins or place different kinds of coins in separate bowls. Enlist their help. Another example, would be to start examining a jewelry box, commenting on how pretty the different pieces are and inviting THEM to join YOU browsing the baubles and brooches.

Safety is first. You probably know your client best and will know safety hazards. For safety reasons, supervise all activities. If your client puts objects in their mouth, remove all small pieces or things that will break when bitten. If you client ties up body parts, avoid rope or string. Avoid sharp objects. Make sure pins on jewelry are closed.

People with dementia have better days than others. What works today may not work tomorrow. Keep trying and know even a short encounter no matter how brief is successful. You redirected your client, got them engaged in a fun activity and for a few minutes brought some enjoyment to their life.

A MOMENT IN TIME:
LET'S LEARN, LAUGH, PLAY AND PRAY!

Copyright 2020® Always An Angel Homecare

SENSORY THERAPY

Animal Therapy

Coin Sorting

Cutting Coupons

Dolls

Exploring a Jewelry Box

Fidget Mats

Make

Purchase

Finger Painting

Guess that Scent

Investigate a Pocketbook

Make Cozy Sensory Kits

Make a Memory Box

Make a Pasta Necklace

Make a Rummage Box

Make Sensory Bags

Pop Bubble Wrap

Stacking Party Cups

Stacking Tupperware

SENSORY THERAPY

ANIMAL THERAPY

What beats the companionship of a furry friend without the demands of walking your pet, picking up poop, vet bills, and more - A ROBOTIC ANIMAL!

Scientists have found that robotic pets may have proven therapeutic benefits and could serve as a more accessible alternative to traditional pet therapy for people with dementia. While research shows that animal-assisted therapy can reduce their loneliness and relieve their agitation, caring for animals is expensive and requires a great deal of attention. Robotic pets, however, can ease the irritability and apathy of those with dementia according to the research. [Robotic Pets Keep Older Adults Company During Coronavirus Lockdown](#)

Robotic cats that purr and dogs that bark are bringing comfort and joy to many seniors with moderate to late-stage dementia. With pet-like sounds and realistic fur, clients can have hours of fun interacting and caring for their pets.

[WHERE TO PURCHASE ROBOTIC ANIMALS](#)



Suggest your client names their pet.



SENSORY THERAPY

COIN SORTING

Ask your client to sort coins for you. It can be fun, soothing and can give your client a sense of purpose and satisfaction. This activity may evoke memories of them managing their own finances.



CUTTING COUPONS

Even if your client never clipped a coupon before in their life, coupon clipping together with your client has many benefits. It keeps their mind occupied, gives them a sense of purpose and is a form of socialization. Don't worry if the coupons aren't cut out properly or it's the wrong brand of peanut butter - the outcome doesn't matter. The goal is to keep the dementia mind occupied and your client feeling useful and good about themselves.



Use safety scissors please!



SENSORY THERAPY

DOLLS

Seeing a client play with dolls can result in mixed emotions - it can be sad to see someone with two masters' degrees now behaving like a little girl playing with dolls while on the other hand while doing so, they may be engaged, relaxed and happy.

While individuals may have different views on the use of dolls and children's toys with people with dementia, it is now widely recognized that dolls can offer a very powerful therapeutic benefit if used at the right time and in the right way. Playing with dolls can fulfill the human need for comfort and attachment and allows your client to nurture and care for someone else. Caring for dolls can bring back happy memories of early parenting and make them feel useful. There can also be improved communication between the client and others using a doll.

Playing with dolls can be a worthwhile and extended activity - purchase doll clothes from Goodwill and change their outfits; purchase bibs, comb, brush, and bottle from the Dollar Store. You may even high a high chair or crib in the attic or you can purchase from a store like Once Upon a Child (nationwide franchise selling used children's items). You may want to make caring for the doll a part of your client's daily routine - feeding, rocking and cradling, putting them to sleep and changing outfits.

Again, we acknowledge and recognize it can be very difficult for family members to see their loved one either playing with a doll or thinking the doll is a real baby.

THE POSITIVE EFFECT OF THERAPY DOLLS FOR DEMENTIA



If your client thinks the doll is a real baby, don't refer to the doll as a doll but as a real baby and treat the doll like a real baby.

SENSORY THERAPY

EXPLORING A JEWELRY BOX

Many people have fond childhood memories of looking through their grandmother or great aunt's jewelry box. Seniors with dementia often enjoy exploring jewelry boxes too. Some might simply rummage through the box, while others enjoy organizing it. Perhaps, help them try on some necklaces. Factor in your client's tendencies. If they put small items in their mouth, remove small earrings.



SENSORY THERAPY

FIDGET MAT OR BOX - MAKE

Sometimes your client may feel anxious and not know what to do with their hands. A Fidget Box can help keep them occupied. Make a Fidget Box using a container and fill it with some inexpensive odds and ends you can find in the house or buy at the Dollar Store. Gather things in a variety of colors and textures. Pull out the box when your client needs something to do and throw everything back into the box when they are done. Some possible items include:

- Things with zippers or Velcro closures
- Little wind-up toys
- Stress balls for squeezing
- Brightly colored plastic springs like a Slinky
- Mini-stuffed animals
- A piece of soft fleece or faux fur
- Old keys on a keyring

[6 Ways to Help Seniors with Alzheimer's Keep Hands Busy](#)

FIDGET MAT OR BOX - PURCHASE

What is a Fidget Mat? This therapy toy or activity for dementia clients uses their motor skills, tactile sensations, helps with anxiety and keeps them busy! Highly recommended for car rides. Contains action features, texture features and décor features.

[Watch this link to understand more - Make a Fidget Mat.](#)

[Where to purchase - Fidget Blanket for Dementia.](#)



SENSORY THERAPY

FINGER PAINTING

Finger painting is a wonderful tactile experience, strengthens fine motor skills, allows your client to create and is typically emotionally soothing. All of the ideas below are safe and edible for your client.

FOOD ITEMS TO USE AS FINGER PAINT

There are many food items you can use to finger paint:

- Pudding
- Fluff
- Yogurt
- Use cooked foods to color the paint. For example: blueberries, carrots, beets, and butternut pumpkin
- Or add food coloring

If you don't have the above items on-hand in the house, you can always make your own finger paint.

HOMEMADE FINGER PAINT RECIPES

WHITE FLOUR FINGER PAINT

Ingredients:

- 2 Cups white flour
- 2 Cups cold water
- Food coloring

Directions: Put water into a large bowl. Slowly add the flour while whisking. After the mixture is combined, divide it into smaller bowls. Add your food coloring of choice.

CORNSTARCH FINGER PAINT

Ingredients:

- 1/2 Cup cornstarch
- 2 Cups water
- Liquid food coloring

Directions: Mix cornstarch and water in a saucepan and boil until the mixture thickens. Allow the mixture to cool and then add food coloring.

SENSORY THERAPY

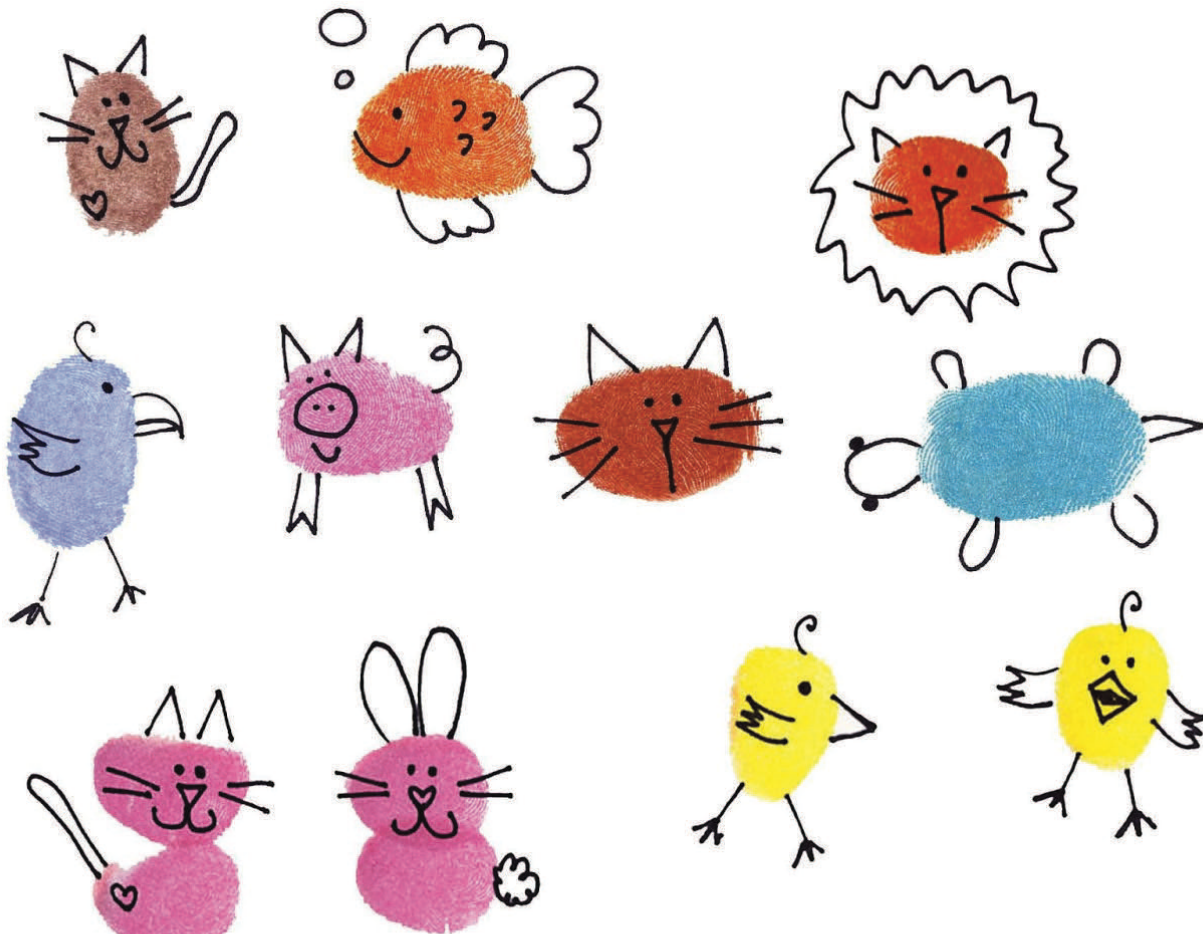
NOW TO FINGER PAINT!

Have all your supplies in place before starting including a wet towel for easy clean-up of your client's hands when done. Have your client write their name, make shapes, play tic-tac-toe, or explore these links below for more ideas. Celebrate your client's creation - post on the wall, share with a family member, or send to the office. Explore these links for more ideas.

[21 Creative Yet Easy Finger And Thumb Painting Ideas](#)
[How to make Handprint Animals | Palm painting](#)



Tape paper to the table or a large cutting board so the paper doesn't land on the floor.



SENSORY THERAPY

GUESS THAT SCENT

Gather some common household items and create a smelling station. You can either put an item directly into a small baggie, saturate a cotton ball, place in a small cup or keep in their original container. Have your client sit comfortably and close their eyes.

Present an item for your client to smell. Ask them to describe the scent. Does this scent bring back any memories? Ask more questions to bring them further down Memory Lane. Have them guess the scent. Some possible items are:

Almond extract
Basil
Chocolate
Cinnamon
Curry
Coffee
Garlic
Lavender
Lemon
Nutmeg
Orange peels
Peppermint
Pinecones
Pumpkin Spice
Rose Petals
Soaps and
Shampoos
Thyme
Vanilla extract



Create a Christmas Scent Package
during December

SENSORY THERAPY

INVESTIGATING A POCKETBOOK

Pocketbooks can be literal treasure troves for clients with dementia. From fun textures to zippers, snaps to straps, purses offer a time-consuming form of entertainment. Stock them with jewelry, keys (for those who do not wander), photos, books, or spare change for extra fun. Consider what types of belongings your client would enjoy discovering in a handbag. For some clients with dementia, handbags trigger an urge to travel. Avoid putting the purse over your shoulder to avoid inspiring an elopement. [Nine Everyday Activities for Seniors with Dementia](#)



You may want to remove the lipstick if your client is no longer using properly.

SENSORY THERAPY

MAKE COZY SENSORY KITS

Sensory stimulation is an excellent way to promote peace and calm with all your client. It is especially effective for clients who may struggle with participating with other activities due to later stages of dementia. The fall and winter seasons are ideal for creating a few sensory kits that encourage coziness and relaxation. Create these kits as is or combine supplies you already have on-hand to make kits that your client will want to snuggle in and get comfortable.

Cozy Up Kit #1 - A fuzzy and soft blanket; comfortable, fuzzy socks; vanilla-scented hand lotion and piano music - [visit this link - George Winston - Autumn - Full Album - George Winston: Autumn - Full Album.](#)

Cozy Up Kit #2 - Battery operated candles; A photo book of fall or winter landscape scenes; Spice jars to smell: nutmeg, cinnamon, allspice, cloves and crackling fireplace sounds - [visit this link for Burning Fireplace with Crackling Fire Sounds - Burning Fireplace with Crackling Fire Sounds.](#)

Cozy Up Kit #3 - Comfortable and fuzzy blanket; snow globe to shake; evergreen-scented lotion; photo book of cabins in beautiful and scenic areas; [visit this link for Snow Falling on Lake - Eight Hours of Snow Falling on Lake. Cozy Sensory Kits© GoldenCarers.com Page 1 of 1](#)



SENSORY THERAPY

MAKE A MEMORY BOX

Using a box or even an old suitcase, gather items that have a special meaning to your client. Gather things together that are significant – photos, souvenirs, awards, etc. Long term memory is typically well-seated, and this can spark their memory and evoke conversation. Treasures can include items from vacations, college days, the military. The Memory Box will give them pleasure touching and reminiscing and they can share with their family. [Visit this link to learn more - How Memory Boxes Assist People with Dementia.](#)



MAKE A PASTA NECKLACE

Using yarn, twine or a shoelace, string any pasta that has a hole in the middle to make a necklace.

You can paint the pasta before stringing using acrylic paints. Use different shapes of pasta to change it up and make your necklace more interesting. Make a matching bracelet too!



SENSORY THERAPY

MAKE A RUMMAGE BOX

Get an old shoe box and cover with wrapping paper or purchase one of those decorative boxes at Michaels or Joann Fabrics. Collect items your client would have used at work or from hobbies and load up the container for them to “rummage” through for hours or minutes of touching, playing with, organizing, and/or reminiscing.



MAKE SENSORY BAGS

Provide small bags made of different fabric textures like cotton, velvet, and silk and fill with different sized beans and grains. For example: you can fill with dried green peas, lentils, rice, flour, sugar or salt, peppercorns, etc. Talk about the different textures with your client while they feel and touch the tactile bags.



SENSORY THERAPY

POPPING BUBBLE WRAP

Who doesn't love popping bubble wrap? This is one of the simplest activities around but very compelling and satisfying. Don't have any bubble wrap around the house? Don't fret, you can purchase at an office supply store or mail packaging store.



STACKING PARTY CUPS

Purchase some party cups (Red Solo popular with the college kids) and have your client help you “clean up” by asking them to stack or sort them.



SENSORY THERAPY

STACKING TUPPERWARE

Tupperware is a thoughtful and wonderful alternative to children's blocks offering a similar experience with an age-appropriate twist. Food storage containers are an awesome way to engage people with dementia. Clients can take lids on and off and then sort and stack Tupperware pieces. Seniors with progressed dementia might simply hold and feel the containers and they won't break if dropped.

If you don't have any Tupperware pieces, you can purchase similar items at the Dollar Store. Look for brightly colored pieces to add even more fun, especially red. Stackable measuring cups and spoons you already may have on hand from the kitchen are great substitutes too.

