****

**Reminiscence Tool Kit Guide**

The following is a guide to help you create your own reminiscence toolkits. Reminiscence toolkits can be used to help engage people living with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia with hobbies or interests that are important to them.

With all toolkits, please put a label on that states in some form that these tool kits are to be used under close supervision. Some of the items could injure the person using them if not supervised. These toolkits are an interactive activity.

These suggestions are guidelines. You can adapt these tool kits to your area and population.

Cooking Toolkit

Suggested items: measuring cups, spoons, cooking utensils, baking pans, pot holders, dish cloths and towels, sponges, cookie scented candles, cooking magazines, recipes/cook books, spices, herbs

This tool kit is easy to put together, and be customized very easily depending on how many funds are available. Any dollar store is a good place to start compiling items. Thrift/second hand stores are a good source for many items, including aprons and cookbooks that have a lot of photos. Because reminiscence toolkits are meant to be multi-sensory, try to get different colors, smells, and textures in your kit. If you want, put in small containers that have a spice or two (cinnamon is good) or an aromatic herb (rosemary works well) for the sense of smell. Let the person put on the kitchen mitt, wear the apron, smell the herbs, handle the utensils and look at the photos in the cookbooks. Ask about their experience in cooking, or if you know, bring up a favorite dish they cooked, who they cooked for, if they had a garden, etc. There are a lot of open ended questions that can be asked. An activity for this tool kit would be baking cookies or decorating sugar cookies or cupcakes.

Handyman Tool kit

Suggested items: pliers, screwdrivers, safety glasses, handyman apron, flashlight, paint roller, sandpaper, paintbrush, board with bolts, nuts, washers

For this tool kit, a dollar store can help keep the cost down when compiling items. You can find pliers, screwdrivers, safety glasses, gloves, paint roller, flashlight, etc. We decided not to put a hammer in ours due to potential safety risks. You may have to go to a home improvement store for a few wrenches and nail apron. For this toolkit, we put in a small board (approx. 4”x10”) that had several (3-4) bolts and nuts with washers that corresponded to the size of wrenches. This interactive component can be used by taking the nuts off and putting them back on. We also put a couple of screws with larger heads in the board so a person can use a screwdriver to screw them in or out. Ask your local home improvement store if they can help put together the board. Make sure there are no splinters on the board – sand it down a little.

Sewing Tool kit

Suggested items: colorful balls of yarn, embroidery thread, crochet thread, crochet hook, embroidery hoop, a pillowcase to be embroidered, several pieces of ribbon, rick rack, elastic, some small pieces of material in different textures (cotton, fleece, knit), a card of buttons, a zipper, a thimble, patterns, examples of crochet, embroidery, patchwork or even a baby’s or child’s garment

For this tool kit, if you know someone who sews, crochets, knits, etc., they would be a great resource with compiling items. This toolkit is a great opportunity to use many different textures. The goal is to help illicit responses from someone who loved to sew, embroider, or crochet by showing familiar items. Don’t worry if they aren’t able to name items or remember what they are for, just let them run their fingers over the ribbons, elastic, material pieces. If you have something they have sewed, crocheted, knitted, etc., talk about that or your favorite piece, etc. An activity for this tool kit could be using a blunt needle and working a design in plastic or stiff paper cards.

Hunting or Fishing tool kits

Suggested items: Small antlers, spent shotgun shells, lures with hooks removed, plastic worms without hooks, a stringer, a reel or even a short rod (if possible), a minnow net, camo or orange hat and/or vest, arrow, hunting/fishing magazines

These tool kits are easier to compile if you know of someone who is an avid fisherman or hunter. More than likely, they will have magazines and other items they would be happy to donate. If not, many of the items can be found at outdoor stores or even generic shopping centers. Often, it is very challenging to find engaging activities for people who have enjoyed being outdoors. This toolkit builds on memories of favorite trips or special hunts, and is best utilized if you are able to bring in old photos or stories from the person’s life. If you are in an area that people do a lot of hunting or fishing, this could be a great tool kit.

Farming tool kit

Suggested items: farming/livestock magazines, small bags of soybeans, corn, wheat, oats, small farming figurines (tractor, combine, planter, etc.), small farm animal figurines, photos of older farm machinery

If you live in a farming area, this would be a good tool kit. In addition to current magazines or figurines, it can also be a good addition to have photos of older machinery as a person living with dementia might remember growing up with using that rather than newer equipment. Talk to your local farm bureau or a farmer to see if they would be willing to donate a handful of soybeans, corn, wheat, oats, etc. to the toolkit.

Gardening tool kit

Suggested items: Gardening magazines, seed catalogs, especially with colorful pictures, gardening gloves, flower and vegetable seed packets, small flower pots, a garden flag, silk flowers, scented candles with flower scent, plastic trowel, small bag of dirt

With these items, it is easy to begin telling a story as if we were preparing for spring. Using items such as the gardening magazines and seed catalogs to first pick out what you and the person you’re with would like to plant. From there, you can begin talking about using the gloves and trowel to plant the seeds. Using other items such as silk flowers or scented candles can help finish the experience. For this toolkit, we often like to pair the activity of planting a small plant or flower in a pot for them to water and take care of. Marigolds or ivy would be hardy plants to work with.

Beauty Tool kit

Suggested items: Cotton balls, makeup brushes, old fashioned curlers for hair, nail clippers, cardboard nail file, toothbrush, comb, brush, hair barrettes, combs or clips, Qtips, face moisturizer, lipstick, blush, nail polish, perfume, hair pins

For this tool kit, there are a lot of sensory items, especially touch. These items are very common and familiar items that could be found at your local dollar store or shopping center. Often, this routine might be very engrained in someone’s memory and can prompt them to share how they used to wear their hair, put on makeup, etc. An activity for this tool kit might be painting their fingernails.

Some other suggestions for tool kits are:

Wedding/anniversaries Church/religion

School War Years

The best part about using reminiscence toolkits is that they can be customized to each individual. Use your imagination to come up with ideas for other tool kits and their contents.

*Created by Effingham Area Alzheimer’s Awareness*

*For more information, please visit* [www.effinghamalz.org](http://www.effinghamalz.org)*.*