

Reminiscence Therapy



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What is Reminiscence Therapy?

Reminiscence work or therapy (as it is also called) is a form of 'keep fit' for the brain. We all know the benefits of keeping physically strong and active but as time passes we can find it more and more difficult to move and bend or reach. Movements which we used to take for granted, now become harder to execute and we have to make a conscious choice to keep ourselves fit and flexible. Well, it is very much the same with the brain. Memories which used to flow easily into our minds become more difficult to access as time passes and we have to make real effort, in other words exercise our brain, to recall them.

Reminiscence work is a way of keeping the brain active, by sharing our life experiences and stimulated, by hearing the stories of other group members.

Why is it important?

Our memories, our experiences in life form the basis of our identity - it's how we know who we are. It's how others know who we are also. This is why it is so important to keep these memories fresh and real.

Many older people now live on their own and so the opportunities for spontaneous reminiscing become limited. A reminiscence group gives a focused but informal opportunity for members to share their memories and talk about their lives. More importantly the group provides support and encouragement for those who find it difficult to remember their past experiences.

What happens in a session?

Each session has a particular focus although the contributions from the members influence the direction of the discussion. Some of the subjects that we have covered this year include, home life; street games; schooldays; the war years; changes in the neighbourhood and there are many more. As the discussion develops people find that more and more stories and experiences come back to them. Some participants use their note books to make a list of things that come to mind.

Although each member is encouraged to participate I make sure that no one is pressured to reveal details of their life which they do not wish to share with others.

To sum up then, a reminiscence session:

- Stimulates the brain – like anything else the brain must be used to keep it working properly.
- Taps into long term memory when short term memory has become a problem.
- Aids communication and understanding.
- Adds value to leisure time.
- Increases the sense of self worth.
- Aids understanding between carers and residents.
- Creates a lot of enjoyment.

Apart from the social and therapeutic value of taking part in a reminiscence session, there is a lot of laughter during our discussions and that is perhaps the most valuable thing of all. We are an open and friendly group, why don't you join us?