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RUMMAGE BOX & DEMENTIA

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People with dementia can often remember the distant past more easily than recent events. The rummage box is a means of tapping into memories from the past and helps people with dementia feel empowered and secure in familiarity. It is about reminiscence.

When a person has dementia they begin to lose their short term memory and memories. They can forget about things that have happened in the last few days, months or years. They may even have forgotten what occurred earlier in the day.

However, people with dementia can retain their long term memories and find comfort in discussing things from their past. Particularly things they enjoyed like past interests, hobbies or even their past employment.

The rummage box can be used as an activity, as a distraction, and therapeutically as a reminiscence tool. The rummage box can be made of a shoe box, a biscuit tin, a drawer, press or even a room.

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HOW TO CREATE AND USE THE RUMMAGE BOX

To direct the persons attention to the rummage box you must first get a photograph of them that they like and recognise as themselves. As he or she may have little short term memory this usually involves using a photograph of them when they were in their 20's, 30's or 40's. It is important they can relate to the photograph as being them.

Enlarge the photo and laminate it and tape in to the front of the box. When it gets their attention and they open the box it should be filled with as many old memorabilia as possible that they enjoyed doing when they were younger in their hobbies, past times and even work life.

Some examples can be:

- pictures or photographs of holidays or days/nights out.
- Objects they used to enjoy such as knitting wool, old cameras, DVDs of their favourite films when they were younger.
- Old objects or tools (once they are safe to do so) they used to work with.

Here are some examples from family caregivers who successfully used reminiscence activities with loved ones:

> ***"My mum loved horses but a horse was not going to be an option but I discovered that she also loved stuffed animals that appeared lifelike as she was able to groom them"***
>
> ***Jane, Waterford***

> ***"My dad loved to golf but was unable to use normal golf clubs as his coordination was affected and so it was unsafe to leave him with the normal golf clubs. I bought him the small plastic indoor golf clubs which he thoroughly enjoyed instead".***
>
> ***Andrea, Dublin 14***