

## **MEMORY BOX**

A 'Memory Box' can be used as an aid for Reminiscence Therapy which can be helpful for people with dementia. It contains items which can help trigger memories. Alzheimers Australia NSW refer to this as a 'Fiddle Box'. It can also be referred to as a 'Sensory Box'.

Reminiscence is the recollection of memories from the past. We all do it and it can be used for the benefit of others. For people with dementia, reminiscence can be highly beneficial for their sense of well-being and maintenance of social skills. Reminiscence involves swapping memories with friends, family, caregivers and/or professionals, thereby passing on information, wisdom and skills. It is about giving the person with dementia a sense of value, importance, belonging, power and peace.

"Reminiscence Therapy uses prompts, such as photos, music or familiar items from the past, to encourage patients to talk about their earlier memories. It is generally offered to older people who have mood or memory problems, or who need help dealing with the difficulties that come with ageing." <http://www.memoryboxnetwork.org/about/>

### **Creating a Memory Box**

1. Select a box – an old shoe box will do – cover it with culturally-appropriate images cut from magazines – or select one on the basis of its tactile quality such as embossed paper or fabric
2. Select contents for the box – use Montessori principles as a guide (see below)
3. The box can be personalised for an individual by including special photos, music CDs or DVDs and familiar items from the past

### **Montessori Principles**

Alzheimers Australia NSW recommend using Montessori principles in selecting suitable activities for people living with dementia. (Ref: Engaging People with Dementia in Activity Workshop 2014). These principles can guide the selection of items for the memory box based on:

- Practical life
- Cognitive appeal
- Sensorial
- Physical
- Cultural
- Social
- Spiritual

Please see below some suggestions for sensorial items that may be appropriate for someone from an Italian cultural background. Please adapt for your specific culture.

## **Sensorial Items**

**\*Touch:** Include rough, smooth, soft, and hard textures for people to explore with their hands eg pieces of fabric (embossed satin or velvet, silk, lace, crocheted doilies, hessian), Pupazzo (rag doll), leather/suede swatch, ball of wool, spool of cotton thread, nivea hand crème, rosary beads, river-washed pebbles, rough rock, crystals, smooth block of wood, large metal screw (if person is not aggressive), fishing lures without hooks (eg feathers, fake glow worms)

**\*Smell:** dried herbs, flowers & spices eg rosemary, basil, oregano, lavender, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, pimento, coffee beans

**\*Taste:** Sour, sweet, salty or spicy foods or condiments eg salt, sugar, pepper, dried chili

**\*Sight:** laminated images of food, coffee, maps, family, gardening, movie stars, famous singers, good luck symbols, soccer stars, motor racing, saints cards, happy smiling faces.

**\*Hearing:** items and toys that make a sound eg bell, jangling keys

If funds permit, a memory box could also include CDs and DVDs of favourite music, films, jokes, prayers, etc.

## **Personalised Memory Box – Know the person**

In order to create a suitable memory box for an individual it is essential to know the person:

- Age
- Gender
- Place of Birth
- Education
- Languages - literacy/fluency
- Migration History
- Work History
- Family History
- Places lived in
- War Service (if any)
- Hobbies/Interests
- Food preferences
- Favourite music
- Travel experiences
- Favourite colour, flower, fragrance, book, song, etc

*Notes prepared by Pina Leyland, Aged Care Service Improvement Coordinator, Co.As.It.  
Italian Association of Assistance 2014*

Sense	Sensory Item	Female	Male
Touch: includes rough, smooth, soft & hard textures	<p>Fabric pieces of different weights and textures.</p> <p>Items from nature eg., river washed pebbles, rough rock, shells, crystals, feathers, fur, bone, leather.</p> <p>Fake eggs from dollar king ( evokes memories of chicken raising.</p> <p>Nivea hand cream ( use for hand massage)</p>	<p>Silk, satin, embossed cotton, lace, scarf, spools of thread, buttons, ribbons, thimble, crochet sample, knitting needles, ball of wool, lace doilies, hair curlers, bandaids, coin purse, fake old coins, real coins, keys, ring, brooch, rosary beads, crochet hook. Madonna statuette Italian playing cards</p>	<p>Heavy drill cotton, shirt pocket, cuff links, "Corne" ( horn) keyring, ball of twine, paint brush, set of allen keys metal &amp; plastic hooks rope nuts and bolts tiles luggage tag Italian playing cards Soccer ball ( mini) Fishing lure/ line Block of wood</p>
Smell: Includes dried herbs, flowers & spices	<p>Rosemary Basil Oregano Cinnamon sticks Nutmeg Cloves Bay leaf Coffee beans</p>	<p>Rose scented soap Nivea cream Perfume <i>Felice Azzuro</i> talcum powder church incense</p>	<p>Cotton wool ball soaked in <i>Old Spice</i> after shave food spices church incense</p>
Taste: Includes sour, sweet, salty, spicy condiments	<p>Salt Sugar Pepper Paprika Chilli flakes</p>		<p>SAXA SALT ( typically used for BBQs)</p>
<p>Sight: Includes laminated images that evoke memories relevant to post – war II Italian migrants</p> <p>Photographic images of migration &amp; men and women at work</p>	<p>Pasta Images of food and drink Tiny alcohol sample bottles Brand food products eg., <i>Leggos</i> tomato paste, <i>San Remo</i> tubetti pasta, <i>Sirena</i> tuna Panettone <i>Barilla</i> pasta and sauce</p>	<p>Prayer cards, little bible funeral mementos bomboniere images of movie stars and singers such as Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Mario Lanza, Toto ( comedian like Jaques Tati), Sophia Loren, Commedia dell'Arte images Cento lire coin or note. Folksong album covers</p>	<p>Map of Italy Italian flag Vittoria coffee cup Espresso cup Football objects, keyrings, the mondino Vespa pictures Wrist watch <i>Frecchia Azzura</i> bath salts, Brut aftershave Gillete razor blades Yellow canary Crema da barba alla menta Cafe ristretto</p>

		Italian regional vistas Italian rural scenes, historical photos Italian movies	Cafe corretto ( with grappa)
Hearing: Includes music, movies and items that make a sound.	Set of keys Musical instruments eg., mouth organ DVDs, you tubes in Italian language – not subtitled in Italian	Church hymns, Christmas hymns Italian folk songs of the 40's, 50's & 60's Italian Opera Pavarotti, Boccielli, Andre Rieu	Song by Toto Cutugno ( lo sono un Italiano) Folk songs Italian Opera Pavarotti, Boccielli Andre Rieu Film with Alberto Sordi "Un Americano a Roma" You tubes of extracts of movies like " Bello honesto imigrato Australia cerca compaesana illibata"