

This month we are focused on life story books & comfort boxes

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Preparing Life Story Books

Purpose: A Life Story Book can provide a topic for conversation for a person helping them to remember and share with others their history and gifts. For someone with dementia, it can also be a reminder to caregivers and family of who the person was before the dementia.

1. The person chooses someone to work with to create a Life Story Book. It is best to be someone who knows him or her well and agrees on a regular time to meet.
2. Purchase an album with moveable pages. This allows the order to be determined later. It might be good to get acid-free materials to keep pictures from discoloring.
3. Together, write letters to family and friends asking them to send photos and share memories in a letter. Ask the letter writers to describe the gifts the person has.
4. Record memories the person is able to share about his or her life. Ask open-ended questions to stimulate memories about earlier periods in the person's life. Together go interview family members and friends about

5. Read the letter that arrive together recording any memories the letter triggers. Put the letters in the book. Add photos and artwork. Use captions for the photos to identify who is in the photo, where the photo was taken and what was happening.

6. Seek out old friends to visit and interview. Tape their memories. Take a trip to visit a childhood home or neighborhood. Take photos and record memories while on the trip.

7. After the work is done, celebrate the completion of the book by having a party inviting family and friends and maybe consider a blessing ceremony of the book.

Adapted from L'Arche Canada <http://www.aging-and-disability>

Comfort Box, A Little Box of You...Support and Self Help When You Need It Most

There are times in our lives when for many reasons we may feel depressed, alone, anxious, unloved or unsupported. There may be others around us, but they are unable to comfort us in the way we need, or we may be too distressed to tell them what we need. When this happens – a 'comfort box' can be very helpful to cherish and nurture you through your time.

When your child is feeling sad or down or worried, your instinct is to wrap them up, give them a warm milky drink and a favorite teddy and settle them down with a book, or favorite DVD. This helps make them feel loved and safe and warm.

You may have heard of the expression "the inner child" – the theory is that inside each of us is our own inner child who needs some attention and love. A comfort box is a useful way of helping you to give yourself the care that your inner child needs... just as you would to your own children.

The idea is that you find a box, bag or something big enough to put what you need into it. Then sit and think what are the things that would generally bring you comfort?

if you are not able to do that, as some suggestions follow.

My Comfort Box: These are the things I am putting in my comfort box.

- I have made a scrapbook out of an old notepad, decorated it and used a few uplifting words as decoration on the front. Inside I will be including things like, quotes that I like, photos, pages with certain happy memories, such as a day out with photos and tickets. My daughters christening, messages from family. Old birthday card messages.. I think you get catch the drift
- Photographs, friends, family, holidays, days out
- A small candle & Lavender Incense stick
- Ibuprofen (I usually get headaches with stress)
- Pictures that My daughter has drawn
- A printout of [Time to Relax, ways to meditate any time of the day](#)
- Memories of My Home town for when I feel homesick

Here are some ideas to start you off, but the best box will be of you own making...

- A soothing smell, such as vanilla or cinnamon or lavender.
- A new candle or tea light in a small holder.
- A favorite CD of relaxing or uplifting music.
- Something to wrap around your shoulders to hold you tight, like a shawl, blanket or pashmina.
- A favorite book, such as a novel, book of poems, or something from your childhood.
- You may also have your old teddy bear, doll or cuddly.
- Family videos or photos of good, happy times.
- Some find chocolate helps; if so a small good quality bar of your favorite brand.
- Some soft hankies.

You don't have to wait until you are feeling dreadful before you use your 'comfort box' – you can use it to nurture yourself whenever you feel like a bit of care and attention.

Many of the folks we provide support for may need assistance in creating this type of box.

Adapted from Bridget of the North Blog, September 4, 2012.

May Activity Tip

May is a great time to take in the fresh air and sunshine. Remember to wear sunscreen and appropriate protective clothing. Monitor being outside if you are on certain medication.

A main advantage of heading outdoors, even for a short period of time, is being able to soak up the sunlight, which generates Vitamin D – necessary for the brain, bones and muscle function, says Dr. Michael Raab, a geriatrician with Lee Memorial Health System in Fort Myers, Fla

Reference: AgingCare.com

Outdoor Suggestions

1. **Attending sporting event.** Attending a professional game, like baseball; "Toledo Mudhens"
2. **Fishing.** Even if someone has mobility problems, a chair or wheelchair can be used
3. **Walk Around.** Take a walk if possible. A person who uses a wheelchair can feel a part of the walk as long as someone is available to help push the chair.
4. **Be a bird watcher.** Put a bird feeder or bird bath in your yard, checking on those daily will give a reason go outside. One can go to the Metro Park for a "bird watch"
5. **Go fly a kite.** Head to a park and fly a kite. They may need assistance getting the kite in the air, but most people can take control of the kite while sitting down.
6. **Yard Games.** Many of these can be done standing or sitting in chairs. Yard Yahtzee, Cornhole, Giant Jenga, Darts and Ring Toss to name a few.

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theme, **Age Out Loud**, to give aging a new voice—one that reflects what today's older adults have to say.

This theme shines a light on many important trends. More than ever before, older Americans are working longer, trying new things, and engaging in their communities. They're taking charge, striving for wellness, focusing on independence, and advocating for themselves and others. What it means to age has changed, and OAM 2017 is a perfect opportunity to recognize and celebrate what getting older looks like today.



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