



8 Ways to Positively Engage Cognitively Impaired Patients

Even if you don't offer a designated memory care unit, many long-term care patients are or will be in the continuum between Mild Cognitive Impairment and dementia at some point during their stay.

Here are 8 ways senior care staff can help engage and support your cognitively impaired patients.

1. Music Therapy:

Familiar music can enhance memory, lower stress, and improve cognition. To incorporate this type of therapy for long-term care patients, play classic songs, host sing-a-longs, and provide simple percussion instruments like maracas.

2. Video Therapy:

Moving images can engage patients brains, so consider showing their home videos, classic movies or recorded concerts and events.

3. Stimulating Therapy:

Boredom can lead to anxiety and wandering, so it's important to have activities to combat this problem such as puzzles, friendly competitive activities like charades or trivia, word games and mazes.

4. Memory Pop Box Therapy:

Familiar items, customized for each individual, can be therapeutic for patients with memory issues. Consider providing them items such as a photo album, favorite piece of clothing like a uniform or wedding dress, or cherished tool.

5. Art Therapy:

Creative outlets benefit patients regardless of the severity of their cognitive impairment. Even as mental abilities decline, good options include making collages from old magazines, finger painting, and working with multi-colored clay.

6. Pet Therapy:

Interaction with pets decreases loneliness and increases positivity. Arrange animal visits so patients can pet a cat or a dog. Or add a fish tank or an aviary in the lobby or other common area.

7. Scent Therapy:

Scents can elicit memories faster than sights and sounds. Consider baking gingerbread during the holidays to bring back happy memories, brewing strong smelling coffee in the morning to get people moving, and using scents like chocolate chip cookies or apple pie to stimulate appetite.

8. Tactile Stimulation:

Sense of touch can increase feeling of trust and relaxation. Collect soothing fabrics, craft diverse texture boards, and ask patients to close their eyes and identify an object - such as a teddy bear or wooden spoon - by touch.

Regardless of each patients level of cognitive impairment, your facility can customize an approach to positively engage with every individual and help them lead healthier, happier lives.

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