

Ageing Playfully Cards



Ageing Playfully is a [Creative Exchange](#) research project offering a creative space during a series of playful workshops, where by co-creating collages and models, participants with dementia have an opportunity to catalyse imagination and social interaction, and reclaim agency in the context of their own lives. In the future, people with dementia can be stimulated to be imaginative and socially interactive by taking part in similar co-creation workshops.

Ageing Playfully Cards offer a number of practical recommendations in playful co-creation workshops for people with dementia and memory problems. These have been developed as a result of the insights gained during the [Ageing Playfully](#) research project. The cards are designed to be used by professional and informal caregivers as well as researchers working with people with dementia and other related memory impairments.

Using the Ageing Playfully Cards

The cards have been divided into three categories that reflect the key stages in planning, running and completing co-creation workshops

These cards aim to communicate Ageing Playfully recommendations for co-creating with people with dementia and their caregivers.

Alternatively you can also use them as a tool to facilitate playful activities prior to your workshops.

The purple box at the back of each card has suggestions for playful activities.

Instructions

‘**Before**’ refers to activities related to organising, planning and preparing for the workshops.

‘**During**’ refers to running the workshops, providing practical tips and a range of activities.

‘**After**’ refers to activities related to workshop completion and how to keep rapport and engage with participants between workshops.

Play Activities

Shuffle the cards!

- Each person in the team picks one or two cards and deals them clockwise.
- After all the cards are dealt, place the remaining ones in the middle of the table around in three categories: *before*, *during*, *after*.
- Read out your card(s) title and discuss. Once done, put back in the relevant category in the middle of the table.

Before



Allow as much time as possible (4-8 weeks) to get to know participants and caregivers before running the workshops.

WHY: Early pre-activity contact helps participants become comfortable with you.

HOW: Attend existing drop-in sessions (coffee and tea meet ups, lunch clubs, support groups) or arrange meetings.

Play Activities

Sharing Time!

- Share a personal anecdote of a specific experience with dementia (Someone you know, saw, lived with or learnt from).
- If you have no lived experience with dementia, share the reason why you are here today.
- Pass the card around until everyone in the group has shared an anecdote.



Carefully select the workshop venue and set up according to individual and group needs.

WHY: Changing the venue could be a source of stress.

HOW: Choose a familiar, accessible venue. Make sure the venue has comfortable chairs to accommodate participants who may need slightly taller chairs with armrests.

Play Activities

Let's bodystorm!

- All play: move around the room you have chosen as a venue and stick a post it note on objects that could inconvenience your participants.
- Write down and share possible solutions or adaptations for each obstacle.

Before



Discuss workshop plans and activities with support staff for feedback and advice.

WHY: No matter how well you plan activities the advice of experienced support staff (informal and professional caregivers) is invaluable.

HOW: Include caregivers and support staff when planning workshop activities. This will improve team-building and workshop effectiveness.

Play Activities

Check list!

- Make a list of caregivers and support staff around your plan or project (3 to 5). Be sure you have their contact details.
- Keep them informed and get their feedback. You may need to add more time for this in your workshop planning.



Routine is important!

Include some activities that are already familiar to participants.

WHY: Changes in routine can be stressful.

HOW: Maintaining certain familiar activities can be helpful. When introducing a new activity or idea, explain it carefully.

Play Activities

Let's play!

From from now to the end of this activity, whenever you hear these words, everyone in the group does one of these actions:

- *Fun:* clap twice
- *Play:* Stamp feet
- *Meerkat:* stand up
- *Dog:* bark: Woof woof!

At the end of this activity reflect how annoying and disrupting a change in our routine may be.

During



**Start each workshop with an
'icebreaker' warm up activity.**

WHY: Icebreaker activities help reduce stress or tension and encourage more active participant involvement.

HOW: Choose a playful activity that helps participants relax and become receptive to listening and contributing in the workshop.

Play Activities

Warming up

- Each person shares a good icebreaker experience.
- Collectively choose or mix'n'match the best one and discuss how to adapt it for your participant group.

During



Go for *short* workshops (maximum 2 hours long). Include plenty of breaks and refreshments.

WHY: Participants will have taken time to travel, whether by public transport or a dedicated door-to-door service.

HOW: Plan your event for late morning or early afternoon and start informally with some refreshments (tea, coffee and biscuits), which provide a rest and an opportunity for socialising.

Play Activities

Stop!

- Have a break right now. Leave the room if you can.
- If possible everyone get a cup of tea and share a relaxing break.
- Agree an exact time for the meeting to finish.
- Reflect on how the break helped the meeting.

* Never underestimate the productive power of a cup of tea.

During



Model-making activities are very effective in stimulating participants to engage in the group.

WHY: 3D modelling with tactile material has proved to be highly participatory and inclusive.

HOW: Touch-based activities can actively engage even the most introvert participants, helping them helping them connect beyond simple conversations to share and demonstrate ideas.

Play Activities

Let's make a model!

- Compile all the objects around you (from the materials you have brought to the group).
- Collectively build a representation of your town or home or favourite place.
- Reflect on the representations, themes and issues that emerge.



Modelling is not about making something perfect or beautifully finished. The emphasis is on the different ideas and concepts they represent.

WHY: Modelling encourages engagement through the use of materials, singly and in combination, that represent different objects and ideas for participants.

HOW: Reassure participants on the process rather than the end product.

Play Activities

Let's make models!

- As a group create a model with materials you brought to the meeting.
- Tell the rest of the group about your extended family and their whereabouts using the items to represent people and places.

* Reflect on how objects and relations between them temporarily acquire different meanings.

During



Combine storytelling with model-making activities to increase playfulness.

WHY: Telling stories and encouraging participants to imagine scenes and representations increases group creativity, cohesion and fun.

HOW: Using materials of different sizes and colours can lead to a playful sharing of stories, that may inspire participants to create immersive, fully developed storylines.

Play Activities

Role play

- Tell a story of something that happened to you when you were last on holiday.
 - Nominate a partner and invite them to act it.
 - The rest of the group tell their version of your story.
- * Reflect on how more memorable your tales have become.

During



Select and use materials that are colourful, playful, noisy, tactile and textile-based.

WHY: People with dementia enjoy interacting with items they can touch, rattle or rustle.

HOW: Participants enjoy touching, stroking or squeezing soft fabrics with their hands, and also textured and colourful material.

Play Activities

Let's play with material!

Select:

- Things that make a noise
- Things that are nice to touch
- Things that are nice to squeeze
- Things that one can use to build new ones
- Funny things!

* Try to stick to everyday objects and objects around you, not necessarily modeling material.



Use pre-prepared and pre-cut materials that are easy to manipulate.

WHY: Often people with dementia have limited dexterity. Not everybody is able to cut out materials with scissors or work with paper stickers.

HOW: Provide simple, robust, modelling materials that require little cutting out, ensuring that everyone can participate.

Play Activities

Some Ideas

SPOONS, PANS, TINS, POTS, BOXES,
PINS, FABRIC, STICKS, FORKS, FELT,
SAND, CLAY...

What else can you think of?

Stick to inexpensive and accessible items.

Think of colourful and playful objects!



Work in *small* groups with participants to create a safe, intimate, space that encourages co-creation, collaboration and playfulness.

WHY: Participants may feel overwhelmed and lost in a large group.

HOW: Having people work in small groups of no more than 3-4 people along with carers and support workers fosters a sense of identity and trust.

Play Activities

Play Chinese whispers!

- Each person reading this card starts a Chinese whisper to pass to the next person in the group.
- Then divide the group in half and do it again.

* Reflect on what worked best!

During



WE LOVE MUSIC!

**Incorporate music-based activities
in each workshop.**

WHY: Music based activities can involve participants in an improvised orchestra of singing, tapping, drumming and beating. Following the rhythm of melodies seems to trigger memories of songs and experiences associated with these songs.

HOW: Incorporate as much music as you can to increase physical activity and fun. Reminiscing in music can foster a sense of identity and trust in the group.

Play Activities

The Makeshift Orchestra

- Each person in the group should take a sound (emulating an instrument or start tapping/clapping)
- Collectively choose a song you all know and build its melody without singing the actual words.

*Repeat until until you are all happy with the tune!



Allow time for a 'Show and Tell' activity at the end of each workshop.

WHY: Sharing what each small group made with the whole group helps to create a feeling of achievement, team spirit and acts as day's summary.

HOW: Reassure and praise the work of each small group. Take this opportunity to tell the group what will happen in the next workshop.

Play Activities

Show & Tell

- Keep this card until the end of the activity, to be use at the end.
- Once all the cards have been played, summarise the group activities with everyone in the meeting. Focus on what was:

new, important, useful, actions to take, and things to be decided.

Invite everyone to discuss and share their thoughts about the activities..



Provide participants with a physical memento related to each workshop activity.

WHY: A gesture like sending a postcard to participants between workshops (if possible by post), with a photo of the previous activities, helps to create rapport with group organisers and a sense of belonging.

HOW: Photos and postcards embody memories that can be kept and re-visited, stimulating memories and acting as a reminder of the next workshop.

Play Activities

Sharing time

- Everyone tell a story connected to an item they have with them.
- (No phones allowed)

*Reflect on the power of objects that help keep or trigger memories.

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[http://imagination.lancs.ac.uk/activities/
Ageing_Playfully](http://imagination.lancs.ac.uk/activities/Ageing_Playfully)