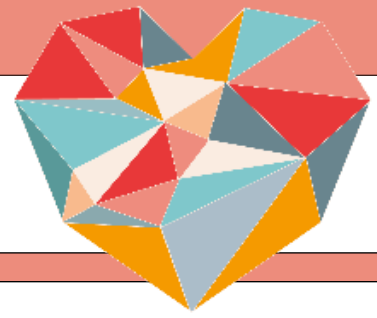


An ABC dementia

for mediators in the cultural heritage sector



Are you organizing a tour or workshop for people with dementia and their family members?
In this ABC you will find some concrete steps and tips to do this completely tailored to your target group.

Short term memory

Storing new information becomes more difficult.

- It is possible that the person with dementia doesn't recall your name or your face. Always wear a name tag and present yourself with each activity.
- Do not only give verbal information, but also support your message with written information. Mention the structure of the meeting, the date of the next activity,...
- Do not overload people with facts and information. These might be hard to store. Instead: tell stories, interesting fun-facts, ... in an interactive way.
- Less is more. Limit the number of artworks (or locations, photo's, objects) you are discussing and take your time for each piece of art.
- Avoid knowledge questions or questions about the recent past (don't ask who won the Tour de France last year or which painter from Ghent died last month).
Instead, ask for feelings, perception, personal memories, ... Phantasy and sense of beauty remain. (What do you see on the painting? How do you feel about that?)
- Make sure there is a clear round-up of the activity. You could hand out a gadget or something that reminds the participant of what he or she has just done or visited (think of a postcard, a drawing, something personal,...)

Long term memory

Many people with dementia (especially Alzheimer's disease) have long-lasting memories of childhood and young adulthood. The more recent memories (last week, last year) are first lost.

- Many people with dementia like to talk about the past. From a work of art or object you can make the link to their youth, their memories, their associations.
- The further people progress in their dementia process, the more valuable it is to use a multisensory approach. Give people a complete experience with feeling, smelling, tasting, hearing, seeing, ...

Disorientation in space

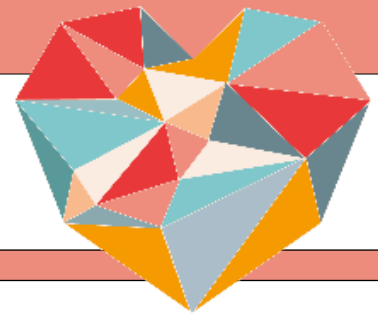
Disorientation in space occurs frequently. The person with dementia does not find the way, forgets where he was going,...

- Provide a clear indication of the toilet, the cloakroom, the desk, ... Use words, pictograms and photos for this.
- If necessary, ask an informal caregiver or volunteer to accompany the person with dementia to the toilet.
- Inform the reception about your activity. If they see someone from your group walking towards the exit, they can contact you.



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Depth and colour

Many people with dementia perceive depth and colour in a different way. A dark surface may resemble an abyss or a depth. Or a fine pattern on the floor resembles ants or stones. For some it is also more difficult to distinguish similar colours from each other.

- Be aware that a floor pattern with light and dark areas can be perceived as a difference in level. Reassure people if they do not dare to walk over a dark surface.
- Provide a good contrast between the table and what is on it. E.g. place a colourful placemat between a white table and white crockery.

Physical limitations

Many people with dementia experience physical limitations.

- Make sure some tip-up-seats are available.

Family caregivers

For many people with dementia, the presence of the informal caregiver(s) is crucial to feel safe.

- Preferably organize your activity for people with dementia and their informal carers.

Sensory change

Filtering stimuli is more difficult. That is why some people with dementia quickly become over-stimulated by too much or persistent noises, crowds and strong smells.

- Provide a quiet room, a quiet time to visit,...
- If someone becomes over-stimulated, ask that person if he prefers to leave the room. If so, arrange a companion.

