

BOOK OF MEMORIES

Creativity applied to sadness (3/12)

DESCRIPTION

The activity "Book of memories" is a reminiscence activity to evoke memories of life for older people. Reminiscence is a way of "going down memory lane", of remembering our lives, reviewing relevant moments, episodes and events. The evocation of memories and experiences is an element of reflection, of knowledge (or "recognition") of the life of older people, which has an emotional and motivating component to overcome difficult feelings such as sadness, and to give value to the moments lived.

Reminiscence gives meaning to memories and to one's own experiences. Older people have many memories that emerge as we get to know them. The task of the professionals who work with them is based on being able to provide stimuli or carry out activities to activate these memories. For example, seeing a photograph of a girl dressed for her first communion can be linked to memories specific to each person that include the family, the way of dressing, the place, the ritual, etc.

As a reminiscence activity to manage sadness, a "memory book" has been chosen. This activity consists of creating a memory book of the elderly. Different materials and resources will be used to create this memory book. This book will collect the happiest experiences of each elderly person in the different stages of their lives.

With this activity many cognitive and motor areas are worked on, and it is an interesting and dynamic communicative resource of oral expression that provides the relationship with a moment of complicity, affection and empathy between the elderly and their careers.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this activity are:

- To improve the well-being and self-esteem of the elderly.
- To strengthen and consolidate the identity of each elderly person in the face of the changes that

the ageing process entails.

- To work on autobiographical memory in the elderly, focusing on positive elements and aspects of autobiographical memories.
- To show the achievement of longevity, that is, having reached old age with a life full of experiences.
- To encourage playful and participatory interaction of caregivers and elderly people.
- Overcoming and reducing negative emotions such as depression, anxiety and sadness

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

The resources and materials needed to carry out the "book of memories" are:

- A book with blank pages for each participating elder. Also, each participant can create their own book with sheets of paper and cardboard.
- Visual resources such as: photographs, articles from newspapers and magazines (from different stages of their lives, celebrities, politicians or historical scenes...), postcards, letters, etc.
- Small objects that can be added to the book (e.g., old banknotes, dried flowers, coloured ribbons, etc.).
- Markers, pens, coloured paints.
- Any other resource or material, something that the elders ask for or have to create their books

IMPLEMENTATION - INSTRUCTION

Before carrying out the activity, the facilitator has to do a previous session in which the elderly people are explained what the "memory book" consists of, so that they can bring all the materials they want to use (photos, letters, postcards, objects...) to the next session.

The memory book consists of creating a personalized book about important events in the lives of each of the elderly participants in the activity. The recommended topics to talk about in the book are childhood, school, festivals and traditions of their places of origin, their first love, the birth of their children, their wedding, recipes, work, their favourite holidays, and other topics.

When making the book, it is advisable (within the possibilities of each elderly person) to propose it as a craft: cut it out, paste it and write on it. To create the book, illustrations, photographs or objects can be used to make the memory more intense. It is very important to take into account the visual problems of older people, so they can highlight words, underline names.

Each elderly person will make his or her book individually, starting with memories about his or her childhood, and moving on to adolescence, youth and adulthood. The participants will paste the visual resources on the pages of the book, and write down the data they want to write, such as names, dates, small anecdotes. Once the book has been created, a group activity will take place, in which the older person who wishes to do so will talk about their memories in the book, showing it. If a person does not feel like reading their book, the facilitators can start to tell it if the person wishes, and the person will probably be encouraged to continue with the sharing of her/his stories. Also, caregivers can use the book to ask the elderly about people and places that appear, etc.

POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS

This is an example of a reminiscence activity; on the internet we can find hundreds of activities that use the evocation of memories. Depending on the materials and resources available to us and the time we have, we can carry out another reminiscence activity to manage feelings of sadness in older people.

As a modification or inspiration for this activity, "the book of memories", we can make use of information and communication technologies. Using the internet, we can search for images of villages, traditions, the clothes they used to wear, videos of TV commercials or scenes from films, popular and old songs. This will increase the accessibility and usability of ICTs for older people. When they present their "book of memories", they can be filmed doing it so that their families have access to it or they can be invited to participate, provided that permission is given by both sides.

EXPECTED RESULTS

With the development of this activity, caregivers/participants are expected to acquire new options or tools on how to manage their own sadness and that of others.

Reminiscence dignifies the stage of old age, as it moves away from the stereotype according to which being old means not knowing how to do, say, think, have initiative, manage, be creative. It allows people to experience old age as a right and dignifies the experiences lived throughout life.