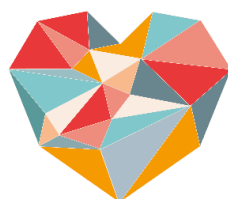




Sing to connect



Good practice nominated by

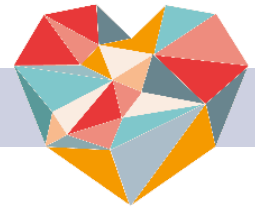


Dementia
in Cultural Mediation



With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The activity



Name of the activity

Sing to connect.

Summary

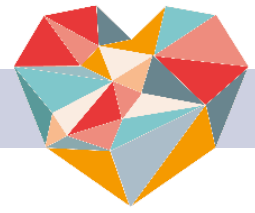
We organise contact choirs in which people with dementia sing together with their families, caregivers, ...

In a contact choir, people with dementia, caregivers, volunteers and healthcare providers are equal to each other. Not so much the singing itself, but the connection is central: you make a connection with yourself and with each other.

We sing with people with dementia for different reasons: for being heard (you have to use your voice), for recalling memories, for reconnecting with one's own identity (music touches on identity), for becoming more alert through singing (it brings them into the present), for experiencing a pleasant activity without pressure (no rules to remember), ...

The activity can take place in a residential care home. For people with dementia living at home, a familiar location is important because it is more accessible for them.

Content



Target group

People with dementia (all stages), both living in residential care homes and at home, as well as their family, caregivers and volunteers are among the target group. Sometimes we also invite other groups to sing along: for instance, schoolchildren (as part of an intergenerational focus). Anyone can sing, so this activity is for everyone!

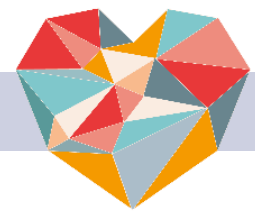
Objective

The objective is to connect people with dementia, their families and caregivers through music.

Everybody sings together as a group: "Singing together makes the 'you and I' disappear and turns it into 'we'".

Partners

We work together with many nursing homes or care facilities that invite us to organise contact choirs with their residents. To reach people living at home, we involve local governments who can promote the activities and provide a location, catering (coffee/ tea/ ...), staff to help it organise, ...



Practical

Venue

The contact choirs can be organised everywhere: at residential care homes, community centres, but for instance also in a public pub or a school. People with dementia are part of the community - they should be welcome to sing anywhere. There is no need for an enclosed space: everyone is welcome to join the activity. We also encourage family members to sing with people with dementia at home.

Make sure that the location:

- is large enough for the group,
- has a toilet that is accessible for people with a disability,
- has a car park (if applicable).

Provide a chair per person. As for as technology is concerned, you can choose what suits you (and the group) best. You can work with, for instance, YouTube videos, playlists or project the text using a beamer.

Day, time & duration

It can take place any day, at any time of the day.

Friends, family, caregivers, volunteers... often have busy schedules. They need to know when the activity is planned. So regularity is important.

Group size

There is no minimum or maximum, but important is the one-to-one contact principle. This means that for every person with dementia there should be someone else sitting next to them (family, caregivers, volunteers, ...).

Supervisors and hosts

One supervisor who prepares the activity.

In accordance with the one-to-one principle, it is important that for each person with dementia there is someone else (caregiver, family, volunteer, etc.) sitting next to the person. No training is needed for this.

Materials & facilities

You don't need much to sing with people with dementia. Everyone has a voice and that's actually all you need.

It is, however, nice if there is musical accompaniment . This can be live or pre-recorded. Much also depends on the group (their age, stage of dementia, personal preferences, ...).

We always provide a drink and a snack afterwards, but some people like coffee, tea and cake, while others prefer beer.

For people who are less mobile, it may be easy if the activity is organised in the residential care home, while others may like it to be outside their usual context.

Some like to have their music sheets printed. For others it is easier when they are projected. In other words, this has to be decided together with the group.

Costs

There are no costs for the participants.

Name tags

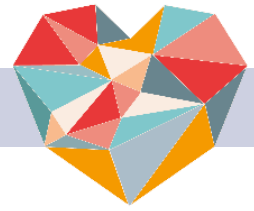
We do not use name tags. We focus on the one-to-one contact between the persons sitting right next to each other. We invite them to introduce themselves to each other.

Memento

No memento is given, but we organise the sessions on a regular basis. The prospect of the next activity is, in our opinion, the best gift.

Afterwards

Immediately after the activity, we always provide a drink (coffee, tea, ...) and a snack.



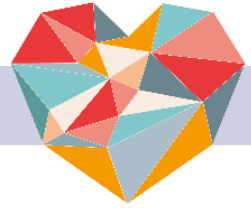
Communication

We work with a methodology we call 'care circles'. You put the people with dementia in the middle. They are the centre. Then draw circles around them representing their network. A first circle can consist of family, partner, children, ... A second circle can consist of the neighbours, the doctors, ... The circles go wider and wider, but all circles can reach potential participants, and give inspiration, who to reach out to. As a next step, you can think or research how best to contact these people on a local level.

Registration

This can vary from group to group. If we organise activities in a care centre, for example, people can register through the centre's ergo-therapist or another care worker. People living at home with dementia can register their interest over the phone, for example. What is most important is that registration happens through personal contact.

Description & Program



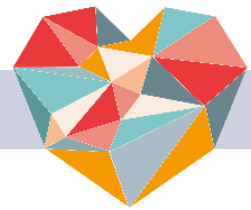
We arrive half an hour beforehand to get everything ready. We place the chairs so that everyone can see everyone (e.g. in a semi-circle).

A personal, warm welcome when the participants arrive is very important. Then we start with a welcome song. This can be a song that invites participants to move or we always use the same song, in which we incorporate the names of all the participants.

Then we sing a number of songs together.

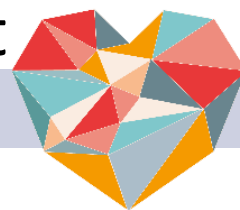
We always conclude with a snack and a drink, where participants can chat informally.

Evaluation



After the singing, while enjoying a drink and a snack, the activity is evaluated informally by asking the participants how they experienced the activity.

Checklist, when to do what



One month before the activity

- Make a plan.
- Draw the 'care circles' and consider who to contact to reach potential participants.
- Contact potential partners and reach out to potential participants.
- Choose a location, with the necessary facilities (the right size for the group, toilets for people with a disability, parking, ...).
- Contact people who can help you with the activity (caregivers, volunteers, ...).

Two weeks before the activity

- Invite participants.

The week before the activity

- Choose the repertoire and collect the equipment.
- Reach out to the partners/facility and volunteers to confirm.
- Send a reminder to the participants and their family, caregivers, ...

The day before the activity

- Listen to the song beforehand and read/rehearse the lyrics.
- Test the equipment.
- Buy coffee/ tea/ cake/...

Day of the activity

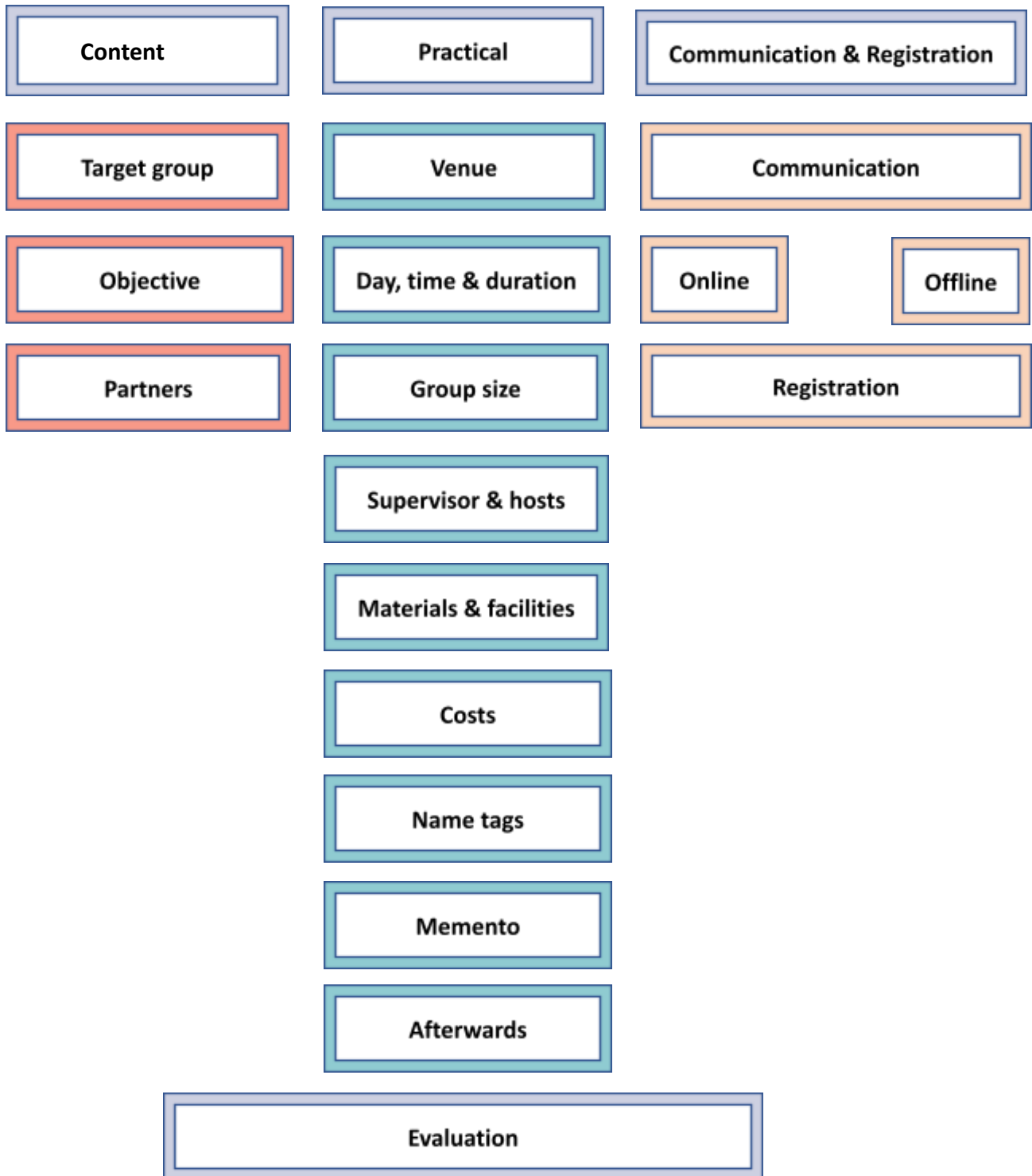
- Be early to set the room, test the equipment, ...
- Enjoy yourself!

Corona

Our activity focuses on two things that became very problematic during Covid: gathering and singing. All our activities were therefore cancelled. We began a study on starting a radio for people with dementia.

Points of attention





“Read the lyrics beforehand and check, for example, whether you have any that express feelings, ...”

“You don’t have to have a background in music as an organiser, but sing regularly, enjoy it and seek support, you can’t do it alone.”

“For a moment I saw my wife again as she was.”

“My accordion? Oh ... that’s a long time ago. I don't know if I can do that anymore. Maybe tonight I will, because now I am full of music.”