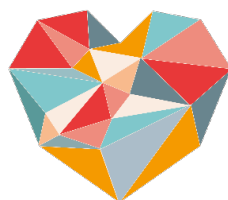


Multisensory storytelling



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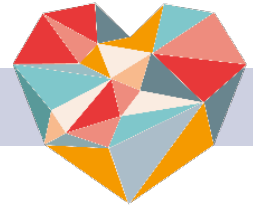


Dementia
in Cultural Mediation



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

The activity



Name of the activity

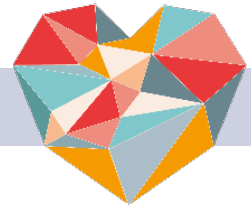
Multisensory storytelling: reading multisensory stories to people with advanced dementia.

Summary

Multisensory storytelling (or MSST) is a one-on-one method, where you tell a short story to a person with advanced dementia. You support each sentence with one or more sensory stimuli.

What do you need? An MSST story and an accompanying box of materials. You can write this story yourself or use an existing story. It is important that the person with dementia plays the leading role in the story. Also choose a story that closely matches the person's interests and background. You can also choose personal objects from the person you are reading to, or choose things that are very recognizable to him or her.

Content



Target group

People with advanced dementia.

In advanced dementia, the senses and basic needs still remain intact. We can use these to 'tell' a story and let it be experienced. Hearing, sight, touch, taste and smell are ideal channels to keep in touch.

Objective

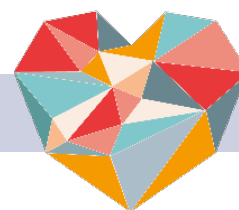
The aim of MSST is to provide people with dementia with a pleasant and relaxing moment. The emphasis is not on understanding the story. We do not expect the person to fully or partially understand the content of the story. The atmosphere and emotions that accompany the story are much more important.

MSST helps to reconnect with the person with dementia during the activity. Think of a touch, eye contact, a small reaction to what you say...

Partners

MSST is a very low-threshold activity. You can perform it at home, in a nursing home, in a day care center, in a hospital, etc.

Practical



Venue

The activity is best done in a quiet location, where the person with dementia is not distracted. This can be in the living room, in a relaxation area, in the room, on the terrace, ... Since you only do the activity with one person at a time, the space does not have to be large.

Make sure you have a table on which to display the items and that the person with dementia is sitting comfortably.

Day, time & duration

Duration: about 30 minutes.

Choose a time of day when the person with dementia is awake and alert. This obviously varies from person to person and from day to day.

Group size

Individual activity: with one person with advanced dementia.

Supervisors and hosts

One companion is enough.

Materials & facilities

- An MSST story: a short story consisting of 6 to 8 sentences.
- An MSST box (homemade or existing) full of items and stimuli associated with the story.

Costs

Free. The only cost is assembling the MSST box.

Name tags

There is no use for name tags.

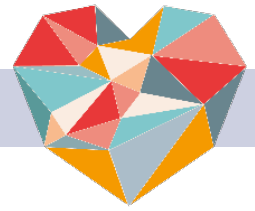
Memento

You don't need to provide a memento afterwards, but you can end the story with the taste stimulus (for example a glass of lemonade, a piece of apple, a small cookie, a cup of coffee...). Choose a stimulus that is connected to the story that you are telling, and feel free to join the person with dementia.

Afterwards

There is no additional action after the story. If you notice that the multisensory story is well received, you can repeat it or choose to tell more stories.

Communication & Registration



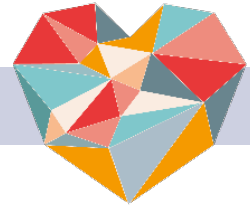
Communication

You select (preferably in consultation with other colleagues or carers) a person with advanced dementia who you suspect will enjoy being read to. Then you inform that person in advance and/or at the moment.

Registration

Since this activity takes place in people with advanced dementia, the registration usually takes place through the caregivers or the informal caregivers.

Description & Program



You can use an existing MSST story or write your own story tailored to a person with dementia.

You write your own MSST story

Before you start writing, it is recommended to search for a topic that appeals to the person with dementia. The subject can reflect something about the (disappeared) interests or activities of the person, but can also be based on a part of his or her life story. The choice is yours as a writer to choose a topic that might evoke positive feelings in the person with dementia.

Then you work out the story. What incentives can you offer around your chosen topic? Try to appeal to all the senses (see, smell, hear, feel and taste), but take into account the preferences of the person with dementia. For example, if the person doesn't like movies or moving images, you better not use it.

As soon as you have a number of possible stimuli and materials for each sense, you can start writing your story.

- Rule 1: The person with dementia is the protagonist in the story. You say this at the start of the story ("I made a story about you") and you use his or her name throughout the story.
- Rule 2: you can offer one to two stimuli per sentence. Make sure that the content of your sentence also matches the stimuli you are offering. If you talk about the garden and gardening, then your stimulus must of course also be related to this.
- Rule 3: keep it short. Think of six to eight sentences. After all, we know that attention and concentration is impaired in people with advanced dementia.
- Rule 4: Use simple language that everyone can understand. Use dialect if the person with dementia understands it best. Make sure that the language does not come across as too childish.
- Rule 5: Have a clear ending. Always ending with a taste stimulus is an example of this. It is also a great moment to enjoy a nice closing together.

You are using an existing MSST story

Preparation:

Before you start telling your story, you first collect all the stimuli and materials. It is best to collect these in a box. In addition to the materials, you also provide your story in your box. It is very valuable to list the possible materials and incentives per line, as in the example below. Certain materials, such as movies, food, drinks, a heated cherry pit pillow... you cannot keep in your box. A tip is to stick a reminder on your box. You wouldn't be the first to start his story and forget to warm up the cherry pit pillow.

If you are presenting the multisensory story for the first time, it is best to provide some extra stimuli and materials. It is not always easy to estimate which incentives will appeal and which will not. It is fascinating to find out which incentives are best for this person with dementia.

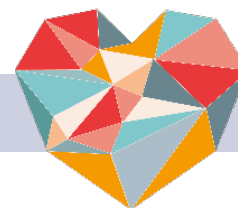
Performance

Now you can start telling your multisensory story. Provide a clear start to the story. You can do this in several ways. Together with the person with dementia, you can take all materials out of the box and display them on the table. You can also leave all the material in the box and start with just one stimulus. There are even people who spread all the stimuli throughout the room and tell the story while walking. You choose how you start your story. This choice depends on the person sitting in front of you, but also on yourself as the reader. Find a way that makes you feel good.

Now the reading begins. Read the line aloud and then offer the stimulus or material. Know that it can take a while before the sensory stimulus arrives in people with dementia. So be sure to adjust your pace: you don't have to rush to read the story. Always offer the stimulus or material with an open attitude. This means that you show the material, but you do not put it in their hands. You invite the person to discover the material, but you don't have to force him or her to take the material. If a person with dementia does not immediately take the material, it can help to show what they can do with the material themselves. For example, you can first comb your hair yourself, or open the music box gently yourself. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that it should be a valuable and relaxing moment for both of you.

Have a clear ending. Always ending with a taste stimulus is an example of this. It's also a great time to enjoy a nice closing together.

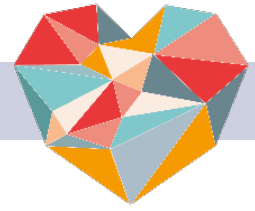
Evaluation



There is no real evaluation of this activity.

Look for small signs that show the person with dementia is 'feeling' the story. Laughing, making eye contact, shaking hands, nodding... are all signals with which the person with dementia makes clear how he or she enjoys the story. And also enjoy yourself telling the story and finding contact that is otherwise difficult to find. Because that's what it's all about: experiencing a nice moment together!

Checklist, when to do what



When you choose an existing MSST story:

A few days before the activity:

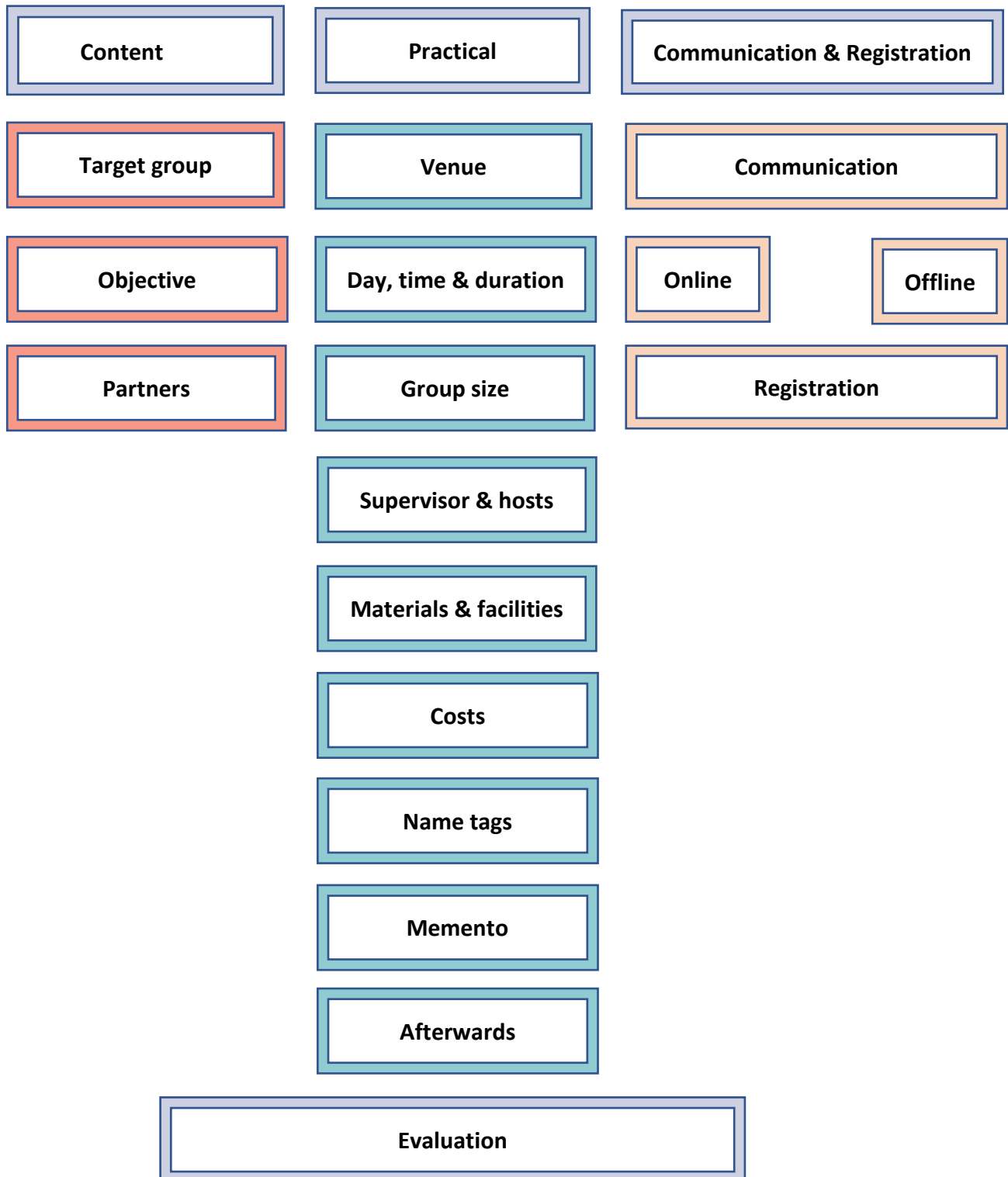
- Choose a story that fits the person with dementia
- Read the story and check if all items are in the MSST box
- Check whether there are objects that you need to do something with beforehand. eg. peeling an apple.

When you write an MSST story yourself, it is best to start a few days or weeks in advance so that you can bring the right objects together in time.

Corona

Since this is a one-on-one activity with the carer or a care provider, it can be performed during a corona period. It is important to disinfect all items in the box after use.

Points of attention



An example of an MSST story:

MSST 'Because it's party time!'

- "Look, Florence, we got an invitation to a party!" (Uncover invitation)
- "Let's make ourselves pretty!" (Apply blush, comb hair, spray hairspray)
- "And Florence, do you look good?" (looking in the mirror with Florence)
- "Oh Florence, you forgot your necklace!" (Feel and apply the necklace)
- 'Come, Florence, the car is waiting! We are going to leave.'" (Sound of a car, show pictures of cars)
- 'What a party, the hall is beautifully decorated.' (Feel at the pendulum)
- "Hear what a beautiful music, Florence." (Open music box, Watch and listen to music)
- "Let's end the evening with a nice drink." (Let's taste a drink in champagne glass)
- "What a great party, didn't you think, Florence?" (Close music box and repack incentives)

*You can find more stories (Dutch and English)
and information [here](#).*

