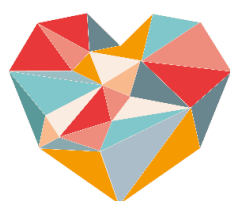




# Nature, Exercise and Literature

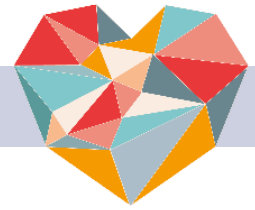


Dementia  
in Cultural Mediation



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

# The activity



## Name of the activity

*“Nature exercise and literature”*

The activity consists of two elements; physical exercise in nature and reading aloud literature according to the method Shared Reading. Nature exercise is a well-known term for physical exercise outside and will therefore be recognizable for the participants. Shared Reading is not a familiar concept to all and reading aloud may sound like something aimed at children. So we chose to use literature in the title instead.

## Summary

The activity consists of 1 hour of physical exercise in the forest and 1 hour of conversation and shared reading at the library. The group meets once a week for 10 weeks.

You can also do the activity fewer than 10 times or as a single activity.

The activity is aimed at younger people living with dementia and still living at home, who are already physically active to some extent.

Meet for example at the library and go out into the nearby forest together, and start the physical session with warm-up exercises.

The nature exercise in the forest should be facilitated by an affiliated physiotherapist or trainer who has experience with nature exercising. The exercise in the forest strengthens the participants' balance, coordination and concentration ability.

Along the way you make short breaks and pay attention to the nature around you.

At the end of the session you can do a quiet mindful walk to achieve calmness and concentration.

Going into the forest gives a sense of calmness and you can focus on your body and the nature around you.

Back at the library you have something to eat and drink. As the host you must assure that there is enough time for conversations. You can talk about the experiences in the forest or the participants' experiences and thoughts during the period of time since you saw each other last time.

The librarian reads aloud a short story, following the method of Shared Reading.

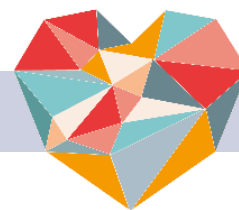
The participants should not know the title of the text in advance. Along the way the librarian makes breaks so the group can have a conversation about the text they have just heard.

The text can help the participants remember situations which they have experienced earlier in their lives. In addition, the following conversation about the story can make them remember experiences and situations from our lives which you share with the group.

Together the group shares moments and experiences and builds up a space for sharing feelings and memories, a safe space.

At the end of the session the librarian reads aloud a poem to finalize the day. All participants help tidy and clean up the room.

# Content



## Target group

The activity is suitable for participants in the early stages of dementia often still living at home. It is recommended that the participants are already physically active to some extent. The participants must be able to transport themselves to the activity, or be followed by a relative or caretaker.

## Objective

If you choose to do the activity as a course over several weeks, the group will meet in an intensive period of 1 day a week in several weeks. They will quickly become cohesive and build a social community, where they can share experiences and concerns about their illness.

The group must be a safe place.

The age spread should not be too large, to ensure that the participants have a common basis on which to talk with each other.

The physical exercise strengthens the concentration, balance and coordination of the participants. Shared reading strengthens concentration and helps remembrance and reflection.

The common activities provide a shared experience and give the participants an experience that they can share with others, such as their family.

## Partners

In Denmark the library was the host, and they collaborated with the Dementia Counselor of the local municipality.

The Dementia Counselor arranged the contact to interested participants and assisted in the communication about the activity.

Depending on your organization's working field it is recommended to arrange partnerships or collaboration with local institutions or organizations working in the field of dementia, your local library and a physiotherapist or trainer to ensure the needed resources and facilitators for the different elements of the activity.

# Practical

## Venue

Nature exercise takes place in the forest or other places in nature nearby your meeting location.

The conversation and shared reading session takes place in a meeting room for example at the local library or a meeting room nearby your meeting location.

The nature exercise must take place outdoors and can be done in all kinds of weather.

If there is no forest nearby, the nature exercise can take place at other outdoor areas where you can use the elements of nature.

It is recommended that the conversation and shared reading session takes place in the same meeting room every week. It must be in a room reserved for the session, where there are no others who can seem disturbing.

It is also recommended to use the same chair and table setup every week.

It is recommended that the meeting place and time is the same every week if you choose to do the activity as a course.

The host should arrive well in advance and it is recommended that the hosts are consistent during the weeks.

## Day, time & duration

Morning is a good time to meet. It is easier to remember the time when it is the first activity of the day for the participants.

The participants will also have time to rest at home before the rest of their family returns home in the afternoon.

Duration of the activity is 2-3 hours.

## Group size

Recommended group size for the activity: 6-8 participants.

2 hosts who could be employees from the library or just from the host organization.

## Supervisors and hosts

It is important that the hosts of the activities participate in the entire process from start to finish. Recognizability of hosts, venue and security are important factors.

Basic knowledge about dementia is required for the employees or hosts of the activity.

## Materials & facilities

You will need the following materials:

- Practical clothing for outdoor activity
- Finding a forest or nature area for nature exercise
- Literature, short story, poem and venue for the conversation of shared reading activity
- Coffee, tea, fruit and bread

## Costs

Activity costs:

- Payment for the physiotherapist or trainer
- Payment for librarian
- Drinks and food

## Name tags

You can choose to use name tags for both participants, physiotherapist, librarian and hosts. Another option is to do a short oral presentation of all participants and hosts at the beginning of the activity.

## Memento

Depending on copyright and other practical matters you can copy the text or poem used in the shared reading session and hand it out to the participants.

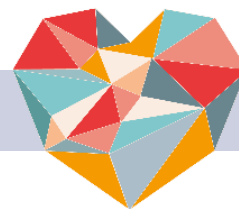
You can either hand it out before the session starts or after the sessions for the participants to bring home the text for further reading or as a subject for discussion with the family at home.

## Afterwards

If you organize the activity as a single activity, remember to evaluate with the participants at the end. You can also use the evaluation as an opportunity to tell about any other relevant activities you host for the target group.

If you organize the activity as a course you can finalize the course by inviting the participants' relatives for a final meeting. The aim of the meeting is to evaluate the course, the participants' experiences as well as being social with the relatives.

# Communication & Registration



## Communication

Communication about the activity and recruitment of participants for the activity can take place on different platforms and through your network of organizations and partners.

If your organization doesn't have direct contact with people with dementia, a good way to reach them is to go through e.g. local authorities, dementia counselors, local dementia organizations and other partners in your network.

You can use the local newspaper to reach out to potential participants and their relatives.

You can hang up posters in the libraries and use the library and other cultural institutions to communicate about the activity.

## Registration

As a host organization you can choose to be responsible for the registration process so the participants register directly to you.

You can also get assistance from partners who have direct contact to the potential participants and let her/him take care of the first registration.

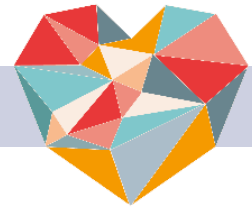
It is important to have the right contact information of all the participants so you as the hosts can send program, meeting time and location etc. to the participants and their relatives.

The day before the meeting you can send an SMS or an email with a reminder of the meeting date, time and location.

On the day of the activity you should contact the participants not showing up to check up on them.



# Description & Program



## Room setup:

Prepare the meeting room for conversation and Shared Reading.

Place chairs in a circle so everyone can see each other. Participants often choose the same chair to sit in each time.

Prepare coffee, tea and water, fruit and bread.

Copy texts for reading so all participants can follow the reading aloud of the text, as well as they can take the text home afterwards.

Outdoors: Meet in the same place every time. Check that the participants are wearing practical clothes and give them the opportunity to change.

Gather in a group and go to the forest or nature location.

## The welcome and getting to know each other:

- If you are planning a course you can invite the relatives to attend the first meeting for a cup of coffee and to give everyone a short introduction to the course and other practical information.
- The host presents her/himself, her role and tells about the process.
- The physiotherapist introduces her/himself and talks about nature exercise.
- Tell the participants that both host and physiotherapist will participate in all parts of the activity and if relevant through the whole course.
- The participants present themselves; Their name, where they live and maybe a little about themselves.
- Show the outdoor meeting place and give advice about practical outdoor clothes needed for nature exercise.

## Introduction of the activity/theme:

Meet the group at the agreed place and time. If one or more participants have not shown up and have not cancelled, give them a phone call.

Check that everyone is wearing the right clothes. Does anyone need to change clothes or shoes?

Help the participants if needed.

Take the group to the forest and start the exercise by standing in a circle. Warming up is important and prepares the participants for what is going to happen in the next hour.

Take breaks during the exercises and concentrate on the nature around you.

Give time and space to talk and observe.

At the end of the session you do a quiet mindful walk, to work on concentration and prepare for the next part of the activity. You get your heart rate down.

Back at the library or meeting location, you go to the meeting room reserved for the group.

The participants are offered time and opportunity to change clothes.

Everyone helps set the table with coffee, tea, water and food etc.

While you eat and drink, there is time for casual conversation about the week that has passed since the last meeting.

When the time feels right, the text is handed out and the librarian or shared reading leader will read aloud according to the principles of the concept Shared Reading. Along the way,





the librarian makes breaks in the text so the group can talk about what was just read and reflect on the story. What does the text make us think of? Has anyone experienced something similar? What might happen next in the story?

It is important to have time for conversation, therefore the text should not be long.

Make sure that everyone has the chance to speak, and emphasize that there are no right answers. All thoughts and feelings are equally important.

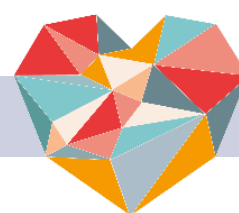
At the end the librarian reads a poem aloud. If there is time left, the group discusses the poem. If there is no time for discussion the reading of the poem is the end of the activity. Everyone helps clean up.

Save time to say goodbye, thank you and maybe see you next week.

Make sure everyone knows how to get home. Will they be followed? Are they picked up?

Do they go themselves?

## Evaluation



If you organize the activity as a single activity, remember to evaluate with the participants at the end. You can also use the evaluation as an opportunity to tell about any other relevant activities you host for the target group.

If you organize the activity as a course you can finalize the course by inviting the participants' relatives for a final meeting. The aim of the meeting is to evaluate the course, the participants' experiences as well as being social with the relatives.

# Checklist, when to do what



## One month before the activity:

- Check up on agreements and contracts.
- Program for the activity or course is planned and prepared. Who does what and who is responsible for the tasks?
- Meeting or coordination with partners and talk practical things through. This will be an opportunity to ask the last questions.
- Find texts and poems for the Shared Reading session.

## Two weeks before the activity:

- Confirm agreements with the participants. Are they still interested in participating? If someone has dropped out, it should be investigated why, is it a lack of information? How can you help? Otherwise, contact persons on a possible waiting list.
- Repeat meeting time and venue on email. Check contact information on relatives.
- Selection of texts and poems for Shared Reading session.

## One week before the activity:

- Send an email to the participants and the relatives to tell them that we look forward to seeing them. Remember to repeat the meeting time.

## The day before the activity:

- Copy texts and poems for the Shared Reading session.
- Check the weather forecast!
- Send SMS or email to the participants about meeting time and meeting date including information on practical dressing depending on the weather forecast.
- Check the last practical tasks.

## Day of the activity:

- Prepare the room and set up chairs in a circle.
- Coffee, tea, water, fruit and bread.
- Make sure to make the room cozy.
- Arrive well in advance and be ready to welcome the participants.
- Call those participants who have not arrived and wait for them to arrive.
- Welcome everyone and present yourself and the helpers.
- Go through the program of the day and walk together to the first activity.
- Remember to keep it fun :-)

## **Corona**

In case the activity takes place during a pandemic or other critical circumstances, always follow the guidelines of the local authorities in your country.

The advantage of nature exercise is that it takes place outdoors in the fresh air, which makes it easy to keep a proper distance.

Regarding the Shared Reading activity an alternative location could be outdoor. You can try to find a nice undisturbed place near the exercise area. You could also find a location with enough space



to keep a distance or alternatively to lower the number of participants.

# Points of attention

