

SENSIBLE SENSORY ACTIVITIES
DIANE MOCKBEE, BS, ADC, NAAP President

1. Mini-Pat Mats

For low to medium function residents

Take “ziploc” bag or any sandwich bag the seals shut and fill 1/3 of it with water. Take a few pieces of different colored sponge bits, glitter shapes or confetti and put in bag with water and seal shut. You can also use sea shells, beads. Have high function residents make for the lower function residents. (Glue shut if it makes you feel better)

2. Sensory Balloon

For low to high function residents

Take a balloon and fill it with six jingle bells. Blow up balloon and secure the end. Toss balloon around to residents or seat them at a table and have them roll it back and forth to one another. Put string on end and make punch ball out of it. Fill with marbles or put a super ball inside (it will bounce). Put sand in balloon and barely fill with air and let residents squeeze . Use half helium and half your own air to keep balloon afloat easier and less frustrating to residents as they are trying to hit it back.

3. Shake-A-Box

For medium to high function residents.

Take a small cubed box and fill with one item. For example, a handful of rice, beans, rocks. Have each resident take a turn and shake the box and guess what is in it. Ask questions, “is it hard or soft?”, “Does it roll or bump?”.

4. What’s in the Bag?

For medium to high function residents

Take a small lunch size brown paper bag - or preferably get colored ones. Fill each bag with an object that has a distinct feeling to the hand. Have each resident take a turn to place their hand in the bag to feel the object and guess what it is.

5. Pull and Stretch

For low to medium function residents

Take an empty food canister such as a “Pringles” can and cover the outside with wallpaper or wrapping paper. Take canister lid and cut a hole in the middle about the size of a quarter. Take strips of different colored materials and tie together - or use crepe paper. Place inside of can and pull one end of strip out through the lid hole, just enough for the resident to grab and pull. Ask resident to name color.

6. Touch and Feel

Any function of resident

Take various objects such as feathers, dusters, soft fabrics (velvet, suede), seal shells, smooth rocks, cotton, textured papers, sponges, bubbles, feather boa, roll ball massager (wooden). Rub objects across palms of hands or face and watch for reaction.

7. Using Your Nose

For high function (can be adapted to low function resident as well).

Take fresh rose or carnation petals pull off stem. Place on a tray and allow to dry out for approximately 2 weeks. Use scented oils and each bunch and have residents guess what the scent is. (Get oils at local craft stores, massage stores or new age stores)

Get small baby food jars and put a cotton ball inside. Put different scents on cotton balls, i.e., vanilla extract, pickle juice, coffee grounds, cinnamon, cloves, banana oil, lemon extract, etc. Place under residents nose and watch for reaction. With high function residents, have them close their eyes and have a guessing game, then talk about how they used each item in their lifetime. Allow tasting of certain scents to expand the group and sensory enhancement.

8. Rhythm Ribbons

For medium to high function residents

Cut brightly colored ribbons of one inch width into lengths of three feet. Have residents do a series of exercises to them using music. Do arm circles, figure eight, lasso, etc. Adapt for lower function by place a plastic ring on the end of ribbon for easier grasp.

9. Sensory Bags for Reminiscing

For medium to high function residents

Take plastic ziploc bags, (large) and place items in them for themes, i.e., airplanes (using pictures of planes, famous pilots, small toy airplane), children's toys (pictures of toys and children, samples of children's games from yesteryear and today). You can also use various sizes of gift bags, cigar boxes, shoe boxes, baskets, etc. Use calendars from Wal-Mart after June (they're cheaper) and cut pictures out. Go to Dollar Stores and select items for bags.

For low function residents you can punch hole in bag and place in rings for a binder, using "Day at the Beach" and putting seashells, pictures of ocean, sand inside; My birthday, putting candles, balloons, confetti, gift wrap, pictures of a birthday cake, etc.

Write a letter to families and community for donations. Look around your department and you will be surprised at what you will find that can be used for sensory enhancement programs.

Get creative, be resourceful and Good Luck!

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