

Creative Writing for Individuals with Dementia



"There are no rules to creativity."
- Laura Jaworski -

Benefits of a Creative Writing Group




Individuals living with dementia are in danger of feeling isolated.

A creative writing group can promote remembering and conversation. Writing together in a group provides intellectual stimulation, socialization, sense of belonging, and ongoing creativity.

The resulting stories or poems can forge connections with loved ones and even new caregivers.

How to Run a Creative Writing Group

- The activity is organized and run by a facilitator.
- Have the group meet regularly, preferably weekly for at least an hour.
- The group should include 5-10 participants, with a core of at least 5 regulars.
- It is important that the facilitator knows the participants by name and uses their names frequently to orient participants and help them keep track of the other group members.
- Writing prompts and themes should be chosen to elicit memories. For example, a beach theme might be accompanied by a bucket of sand, images, sounds of the waves, and snacks.
- Distributing large-print copies of a poem and reading it aloud several times can help provide vocabulary and relevant imagery.
- Words and phrases are to be recorded - often on large poster paper so that the memories can be read aloud during silent pauses. Such readings usually elicit elaborations and further recollections.
- The facilitator can rearrange the words and phrases into the form of a collaborative



poem, which might be edited by the group in the following session.

- These poems can be shared with family, friends and caregivers, as a signal of achievement and also to stimulate further remembering and conversation.

Life Stories

Older individuals respond well with stories when they are asked for advice about how to live and what life lessons they have learned. Under the right circumstances, people with dementia can offer much to the young - and both young and old can enjoy the benefits!

Group creative writing stimulates some individuals to tell more and more of their life stories or even to write stories themselves. Writing down the very words used by an individual to tell their story is important, because one's own words revive memory in a special way - getting "underneath the dementia", directly to resilient long-term memory and more language. Photographs, both personal and generic can be especially successful in eliciting specific life stories.

Thank you to [Dr. Ellen Ryan](#) for providing DementiAbility with this wonderful information. You can learn more about writing in later life through the Writing Down Our Years book series, Resources, and Blog Archives on [Dr. Ryan's website](#).



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