



HOW TO ADAPT PHOTOGRAPHS FOR PEOPLE WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

General Objective

The objective of this practical sheet is to introduce how to adapt photography-related activities so that people with cognitive disabilities can participate and better understand the art.

In this practical sheet, you will:

- ✓ Learn more about cognitive disorders in general,
- ✓ Learn more about how to create a supportive environment for the development of creativity in people with dementia
- ✓ Learn how to adapt an artistic activity to people with dementia.

What you'll need:

Photography elements: selection of photos (family, pets, nature...); photo paper.

Stationery: scissors; laminator; marker; hole punch; carabiner; double-sided tape; communication notebookXL.



Computer: photocopier; computer with various software (for text processing by symbols or images (e.g. SymWriter); for photo processing (e.g. lighthroom; photoshop) and for website creation (e.g. Wix, WordPress)); printer; camera.

Challenges and settings

According to the law of February 11, 2005 for the equality of rights and opportunities, participation and citizenship of disabled people, disability is defined as follows: "Constitutes a disability, within the meaning of the law, any limitation of activity or restriction of participation in society suffered in an environment by a person because of a substantial, lasting or permanent alteration of one or more physical, sensory, mental, cognitive or psychic functions, a multiple disability or a disabling health disorder."

Here are some key figures concerning disability in the European Union:

- 87 million people have some form of disability.

- 1/3 of the population or 179 million people are affected by at least one brain disorder.

- More than 4.9 million people are affected by the most common form of dementia, Alzheimer's disease.

In this fact sheet we will focus on the cognitive disability. This type of disability is, in most cases, an "invisible" disability.

"Cognitive disorders are defined as a set of symptoms that include memory problems, perceptual problems, slowed thinking and problem solving."

There are more than 250 cognitive disorders, here are the main ones:



-*Amnesia* which is characterized by a partial or total loss of memory. It can be punctual and definitive, selective or global

-*Delirium* which is characterized by a more or less pervasive disturbance of the functioning of the mind. It can be the consequence of an alcoholic withdrawal or the consumption of psychotropic substances.

-*Dementia*, which is characterized by a decline in mental abilities. Symptoms include loss of memory, difficulty performing activities, personality disorders, difficulty finding one's way around, problems with language use. Many dementias are progressive, that is, the symptoms appear slowly and progressively worsen.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia. According to the World Health Organization, there are more than 50 million people with dementia in the world, with 10 million new cases appearing each year. Dementia is one of the leading causes of dependency and disability in the elderly.

Dementia is the result of a combination of diseases and injuries that damage brain cells. The damaged cells prevent the brain from communicating properly with each other. In the case of people with Alzheimer's disease, it is the hippocampus (learning and memory center) of the brain that is damaged.

Nowadays, there is no treatment that can cure dementia or slow down its evolution. However, it is possible to reduce the symptoms and improve the quality of life of people with dementia.

Problems related to dementia can manifest themselves in different ways. We can distinguish:

-*Family exclusion*: The sudden change in behavior and the late diagnosis can cause misunderstanding within the family circle.



-The social exclusion is divided into three points: professional disqualification, fear of the disease by society and the dementia is considered as a useless person.

Adaptation

Having seen a brief overview of the different cognitive disorders, we can now discuss some of the approaches that can help/foster the implementation of art activities for people with dementia.

It is important to understand the needs of people with dementia. We can distinguish different types of needs such as the need for clarity and information about the disease, comfort, safety, acceptance, support, self-esteem, social contact, pleasure and finally the need to engage in pleasurable activities.

Art therapy approach: This approach can help improve the quality of life of the person with dementia. Art therapy is based on the use of various artistic media such as drawing, painting, sculpture, photography. It is frequently used with people who are weakened by physical and/or mental disorders. It is not necessary to have any artistic knowledge or fiber to follow an art therapy session. The sole purpose of this approach is to allow the person with a disability to express themselves freely. The final work can reflect a dream, an emotion, a thought, a memory. In addition, all of its elements can help to learn more about the personality of the person with a disability. Art therapy improves emotional and behavioral well-being, reduces anxiety and stress, and promotes positive emotions.

Montessori pedagogy: This method, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, is intended, at first, to promote and develop self-confidence in children. It was then adapted, at the beginning of the 20th century by the neuropsychologist Professor Cameron Camp, to people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. It aims to focus on the use of the preserved capacities of the dependent person and



aims to slow down the loss of autonomy. It allows the patient to find a place in a community.

The environmental - prosthetic approach: It is important to develop the activity place of people suffering from dementia. It was born in the 1970s in the United States. "Its objective is to compensate for the cognitive losses present in the person with dementia through the environment". The improvement of the work space to have reference points and thus promote the development of creativity.

Practical examples and inspiration

You will find below examples of artistic activities adapted to people with dementia:

Activity 1: "Photo memory"

Setting up a "photo memory" workshop to trigger memories in people with Alzheimer's.

Steps to follow

1. Cut out photos of loved ones, animals, places
2. Make photocopies of the selected photos
3. Identify photos legibly, using simple vocabulary
4. Laminate each photo (so as not to damage them when handling them)
5. Attach all the photos with a carabiner.



Activity 2: Picture Exchange Communication System - PECS

Setting up a workshop based on the PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) method. This method consists in communicating by exchanging pictures. It allows people with cognitive disorders - as well as anyone with social interaction problems - to communicate. In addition, the PECS method helps develop language, stimulates learning, promotes autonomy and helps reduce behavioral problems. e.g.: the dependent person must have at his disposal a clear and simple image bank (representing objects, people, or actions of daily life). It is the person who initiates the exchange by presenting the educator with an image that corresponds to his or her current needs. This method is easy to understand, practical and inexpensive.

Activity 3: Photography workshop



Organize a workshop where people with disabilities take pictures and make a photo exhibition. The objective is twofold:

1-The view of others on the talents of a person with a disability.

2-The way a person living with a disability looks at the world.

The activities proposed in infra, allow people with dementia (or other disabilities) to contribute to keeping a balance between their different needs such as physiological needs, security, belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization.



Additional resources

- Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

This resource will allow you to learn more about the main initiatives put in place by the European Union for people with disabilities.

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1137&langId=en>

- Dementia.

This resource will allow you to learn more about dementia in general as well as the actions put in place by the World Health Organization (WHO) to fight against this disease.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/dementia>

In keeping with the inclusive nature of the Team of art project, here is an additional resource in FrenchInclusive

- Coloring platform.

This resource offers inclusive coloring materials. Coloring can be a fun activity but also a tool for socialization.

<https://coloriaz.com>

