

Dementia-friendly Craft

CRAFT
CLUB



GARDEN MUSEUM

Arts 4 dementia
Empowerment through
artistic stimulation

We've teamed up with the Garden Museum and put together this resource full of top tips to help your Craft Club engage people living with dementia. Creativity can play an important role in people's lives for years after the onset of dementia and is a great way to stay active and stimulated.

The Garden Museum work closely with artist Katie Spragg to deliver their Clay for Dementia programme. They have given us their top tips and activity ideas to help your Craft Club welcome people living with dementia.



Image courtesy of Matt Collins



What is dementia?

Dementia is the word used to describe symptoms that affect people's memory and can cause difficulties with language, problem-solving and thinking. These changes are often small at first but can increase with time and affect everyday life. Living with dementia can also change someone's emotions and behaviour.

The four most common types of dementia are:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Lewy body dementia
(or dementia with Lewy bodies)
- Vascular dementia
- Frontotemporal dementia

Top tips for running an arts session for people living with dementia:

Getting the environment right:

- It helps to have a calm setting, which feels safe. Ensure a relaxed, warm and welcoming environment with refreshments provided; teas, coffees and biscuits go a long way!
- Make sure there is enough space around the table and between participants. People living with dementia often have impaired spatial awareness, so remove any potential obstacles so they don't bump into things.
- Greet people with a warm welcome, introducing yourself. Avoid asking questions such as 'Do you recognise me?' or 'Remember when...' Questions should be positive and about the moment rather than the past.
- Speak clearly and calmly, using short sentences and normal pitch. Make eye contact with the person when they are talking or asking a question. Giving them time to think and respond, be sure to take their response on board and value their contributions.
- Give them simple choices, try to avoid complicated choices or options for them.
- Don't worry about time constraints, if participants arrive late – appreciate the effort made to come.
- Provide opportunities for participants to socialise, and make new friends; this is really important to both those living with dementia and their carers.
- Welcome different friends and family members as part of the group. Family and friends often share caring responsibilities. Creative activity will have a great affect on carers' wellbeing too, their need is as great.
- A lot of people love a song or dance! If there's a related song start singing and many people will join in.
- Remember some people will be very vocal when they need help and some won't, so try and share your time evenly.
- Be positive and encouraging but not patronising. Share fun and laughter within the group, but support those who may be frustrated, confused or anxious too.
- Don't be intimidated – people living with dementia will often be pleased to take part.



Image courtesy of Iona Wolf

Five Ways to Wellbeing:

The Garden Museum always incorporate the five ways to wellbeing into their practice. The New Economics Foundation have developed these simple steps:

- 1. Connect:** Feeling close to, and valued by, other people is something that makes us all feel good
- 2. Be Active:** Physical activity is linked with reducing anxiety and depression for people of any age
- 3. Take Note:** Being aware of your surroundings and savouring the moment can broaden and strengthen your awareness
- 4. Learn:** Participating in educational activities can increase self-esteem and help to lift older people out of depression
- 5. Give:** Just a simple act of kindness can boost wellbeing, helping others makes us happier!



Planning the activity:

- Be aware that there will be multiple barriers for participants including dexterity, motor skills and vision as well as language and cognitive differences. Consider how you can adapt an activity if a participant struggles to hold a paintbrush or has limited vision. Think about how they can be supported but maintain some independence during the activity.
- Include tactile and sensory activities (see the activity suggestions using herbs).
- Katie plans themed projects, often linking to the museum. They use a wide variety of themes which connect participants to objects, memories, places, nature, flowers, food and seasonal celebrations.
- Maintain a sense of flexibility. Some people benefit from having structure and specific tasks to complete, others prefer to do their own thing.
- Some participants will just be happy to be there and may not be as interested in the activities and that should be fine, but include them and encourage them as much as you can.
- When planning the session, it's good to have activities for different levels of ability. Ensuring those who are more able are still stretched.

Activity 1 - Clay herb coasters:

You will need:

Clay or air drying clay if you don't have a kiln, rolling pins, skewers, potter's knives or needle tools, fresh herbs (rosemary, lavender or sage work particularly well), coloured slip (optional/available online), cookie cutters, pieces of old fabric to work on.

1. Roll out flat slabs of clay with a rolling pin (approx. 8-10mm thick)
2. Arrange the fresh herbs on the clay with the texture of the leaves facing down. Encourage participants to rub and sniff the herbs before or as they work with them
3. Use the rolling pin, gently roll over the herb arrangement
4. Before removing the herbs the clay can be painted with coloured slip (so the plants act as stencils/masks). If using air drying clay try using acrylic paint instead
5. Remove the herbs carefully with a needle tool or tip of a potter's knife
6. Use a cookie cutter to cut the clay into shape
7. The name of the herb can also be scratched into the clay with a wooden skewer (cut skewers in half to make them shorter and avoid eye injuries)
8. The pieces should be bisque fired, then glazed, then glaze fired. If using airdrying clay, leave it to dry for a 24 hours or so





Activity 2 - Fruit and Veg Stamps:

You will need:

Clay, rolling pins, fruit and vegetables such as oranges, apples, broccoli, celery – anything firm with a good texture or pattern, a knife, coloured slip (optional/available online), pieces of old fabric to work on.

This activity works really well with clay and slips but could also be done with paper and paint.

1. Cut a series of fruit and vegetables in half. You can create a 'celery rose' by cutting all the stalks off in one go near the base and then stamping with the base.
2. Participants roll out flat slabs of clay with a rolling pin (approx 8-10mm thick)
3. Paint the fruit and veg with coloured slips
4. Press onto the clay
5. Repeat to create patterns
6. The clay can then be cut into a tile or rolled up to create a vase (cut a circle first for the base, then wrap the walls around and join to the base – don't forget to score and slurry* whenever you join clay)
7. The pieces should be bisque fired, then glazed, then glaze fired

*To make slurry, mix clay and water to make a gloopy solution. Scoring a pot or piece of clay means to scratch hatch marks into it. Then use the slurry like glue to help join two pieces of clay together

Further training:

Working with people living with dementia can be a challenging but rewarding experience. While this resource is here to help you and your Craft Club to be more inclusive, there are lots of specialist training opportunities out there to help you learn more.

Arts 4 Dementia signposts to nationwide dementia-friendly arts activities on their website. They deliver workshops with arts organisations and training via Dementia Pathfinders. Their training offers art and craft facilitators a greater understanding, increased skills and confidence in communicating and working creatively with people living with dementia.

Useful links:

- www.arts4dementia.org.uk
- www.dementiopathfinders.org
- www.mind.org.uk
- www.nhs.uk
- www.alzheimers.org.uk
- www.dementiauk.org

If you don't have a kiln then try contacting a local pottery studio and ask if you can use theirs.

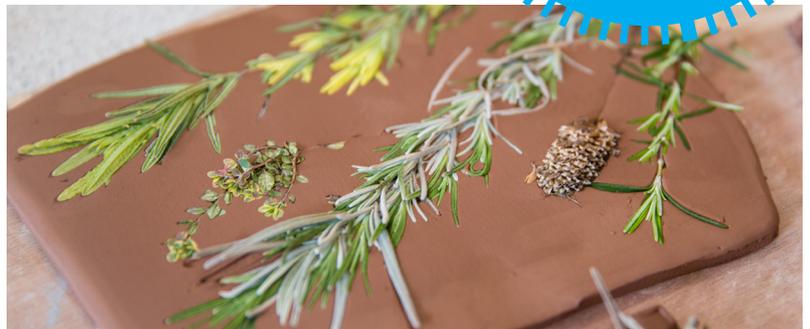


Image courtesy of Iona Wolff

Craft Club is a national campaign that champions craft in schools, galleries, libraries and anywhere else you can bring people together to share craft skills.

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