



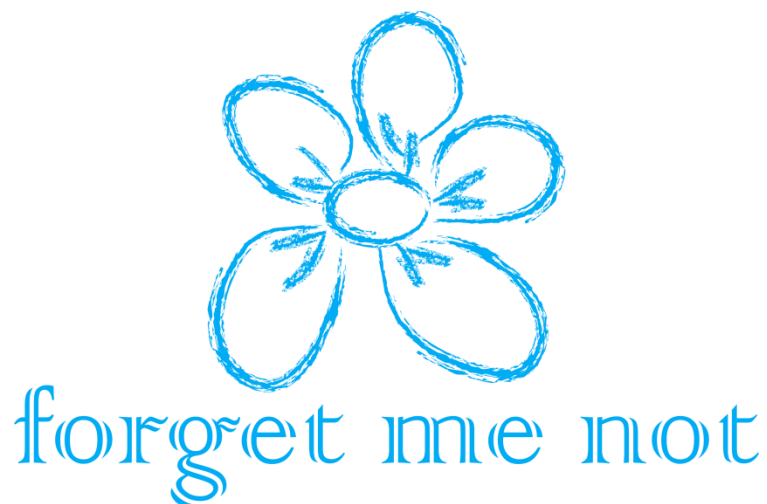
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FORGET-ME-NOT Training Modules

Intellectual Output 2.2

MODULE 3



Memory Box Concept: physical v. digital approach

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M.3.1 Introduction to Reminiscence

Supporting a person who has dementia to remain active and still feel involved in life can be the key to maintaining quality of life even into the later stages of the illness. This is not just the job of an activity organiser or an entertainer, it is also part of every person's role, whether you are a friend or relative, a home or day care worker, a nurse, a care assistant, a manager or a domestic worker.

A number of different approaches and resources offer helpful ways to develop meaningful activity and improve quality of life for people with dementia. Simple assessment tools can help carers to understand the types of activities that might benefit a person with dementia.

Reminiscing about the past builds on the strengths of a person with dementia as they are more likely to retain long-term memories. There are many ways to facilitate reminiscence sessions. Involving family members in reminiscence can be a therapeutic experience for everyone. When choosing topics or themes for reminiscence in groups, think about ways in which you can include as many people as possible, while also being sensitive to the needs of individuals.

M.3.1.1 Why reminiscence (usually) works for people with dementia

'Reminiscence' means sharing life experiences, memories and stories from the past. Typically, a person with dementia is more able to recall things from many years ago than recent memories, so reminiscence draws on this strength. As many of our daily conversations and interactions rely on short-term memory, reminiscence can give people with dementia a sense of competence and confidence through using a skill they still have.

"We all possess memories, we all have our own unique life history. Recalling the past is a means of owning it and hence preserving ourselves. It is a here and now process which holds the teller and the told in relationship with each other." - Faith Gibson (1998)

Many people with dementia find themselves routinely having things done 'for' them or 'to' them. When a person shares something about their past and another person shows interest or enjoyment, it is a wonderful opportunity for that person to feel that they are the one who is giving something to another human being, rather than always being the one who is receiving or listening.

Talking about the past can also bring up happy memories and good feelings, and this can be wonderful in itself, but particularly if a person is finding life difficult. It is also the case that reminiscence can sometimes provoke painful memories. Emotional reactions are not necessarily a bad thing, but we need to respond sensitively.

M.3.1.2 A person with dementia repeats the same story, over and over: why?

It is not unusual for a person with dementia to have a favourite story which they return to again and again. Quite often the story will relate to a time when the person felt particularly happy or proud. Perhaps the person talks in detail about their job or their experience of raising young children. The message behind this repeated story may be that the person is now missing that sense of identity and purpose. By listening to the same story with interest, a good listener can help the person with dementia feel better about themselves.



Sometimes the repeated story relates to a more painful memory or trauma. In this situation, the person may have some unresolved issues about the event and so is to some extent 'stuck' with that memory. It is still important to listen. Sometimes it may be wise to distract the person with another memory or activity so that they do not stay in a distressed state for too long.

M.3.1.3 Why asking lots of questions may not work

'Do you remember when...?' is the question many people might associate with reminiscing. However, it might not be the best starting point for a person with memory problems. Plain, factual questions can be particularly challenging and stressful for people with dementia, who may fear they will get the answer wrong or be embarrassed about not being able to remember. 'How many children did you have?', 'Where were you born?', 'How old were you when...?' – these are all examples of questions which a person with dementia may find hard to answer.

So what is the alternative to asking questions like this? A good starting point might be to share a memory yourself as a way of leading into asking a question more gently. This helps give clues for the sorts of things you will talk about, and may help the person to relax and recall their memories more easily, without fear of mixing things up or forgetting. It could go like this: 'I remember my first primary school teacher. She was called Mrs Jones, she was very tall with long hair and she was very kind.' You can then ask, 'I wonder if anyone here can remember their favourite teachers?'

Using a range of things to stimulate memories

For people with cognitive difficulties, it is important to tap into all the senses to trigger memories. A picture to look at, an object to touch, a song or a poem to listen to or something to smell or taste can all take someone back in time, often to a very specific memory.

If you know the person well enough, you will know the kinds of things that might relate to their past. If you know someone has been in the army, a picture of a person in an army uniform from a similar period to when they were in the forces might spark their interest. If you are working with a person from the Caribbean, offering some sorrel and ginger tea or playing some Caribbean or steel band music might be a good starting point. Reading an extract from an old book or a newspaper can also stimulate memories.

Using the internet

Doing a search on the internet can provide instant magic. Consider this example taken from the practice of the charity Alive! :

- One resident, who was living with dementia and multiple sclerosis, made a request to see some footage of Arab horses, which had been her main passion in life. Her entire demeanour changed from seeing the images and she went from being introverted and withdrawn to enthusiastic and confident, telling the rest of the group about her experiences.

Doing rather than talking

Sometimes it can work well to invite a person to show a particular skill that relates to their past. For example, ask someone who has been a nurse to show you how they used to take blood pressure, or ask a mother how she burped her baby using a doll as the baby.

When a person with dementia is struggling to use words, they may find it is easier to use actions to share something from their past. Consider this example describing the experience of Beryl, an older woman with dementia:

- One day I was spending time with her and, although I knew a bit about her past, I was struggling to get a conversation going. I knew she used to be a secretary, and for some reason it occurred to me to give her a small notebook, rather like a shorthand notebook, and pen – and to start dictating a letter to her, as if I was her boss. I started saying something like, ‘Dear sir, thank you for your letter of... ’ and so on. I was amazed to watch as Beryl immediately started writing extremely fast in shorthand. Within those few moments, her body language changed from a slumped disinterested position to an upright and attentive posture of a woman who knew her job.

M.3.1.4 Why involving everyone in reminiscence matters

Reminiscing can be a good way to make connections between people from different backgrounds or cultures or between staff and service users. When choosing topics or themes for reminiscence in groups, think about ways in which you can include people who may be in a minority, for example, someone who is a different religion or culture or someone who is lesbian or gay.

Remember that some people may find it hard to talk or may feel left out if certain topics are discussed. Sharing memories of raising children can spark lively discussion and can bring up some interesting comparisons about how different nationalities approach issues of discipline of children, for example. But people who have been unable to have children or have lost a child may find this a painful reminder of their loss. Knowing individual life stories will be important to ensure that you are aware of potentially difficult topics.

Some suggestions for reminiscence topics

There is no topic that is entirely straightforward for everyone to discuss, although ‘food’ and ‘holidays’ might be safer themes to start with than ‘wartime’ or ‘childhood’ if you are running a series of groups. There is a wide range of other topics to choose from, for example:

- **working life:** first jobs, best jobs, wages and working conditions, bosses, colleagues, uniforms
- **home life:** housework, children, hobbies and interests keeping warm: sharing memories of winter times without central heating!
- **transport:** first cars, buses, trams, significant journeys
- **sport**
- **the local neighbourhood:** favourite shops or shopkeepers, markets, street traders (a ‘rag and bone man’), significant places in the community such as the town square, the library or the post office.

Involving families in reminiscence

‘Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today’ (RYCT) is the name of a particular reminiscence programme that has been used in many parts of the world. It brings together people with dementia and their



families and staff to reminisce together over a series of weeks. The important principle behind the RYCT approach is that everyone reminisces together and learns more about each other as people, rather than the dementia being the main focus.

Reminiscence is never something that is just done 'to' or 'for' older people only – it is something we can all enjoy. Typically, RYCT sessions give spouses, partners, sons, daughters or siblings the opportunity to see the person with dementia in a different light as they remember a song or a dance or tell a story that they hadn't heard before.

M.3.1.5 Resources and further reading about reminiscence

[Age Exchange](#) is a national charity at the forefront of reminiscence work. It produces a wide range of publications and resources on reminiscence, offers training and runs community-based projects, all based from a vibrant base in south east London.

[European Reminiscence Network](#) shares good practice 'across national boundaries' and has done extensive work involving people living with dementia, their relatives, staff and volunteers together in reminiscence sessions.

[History Pin](#) is a fun interactive website which encourages users to contribute stories and pictures from around the world, which are linked to a giant map so you can search by time or place.

[Many Happy Returns](#) is the name of a company that has produced a range of reminiscence cards – one for the 1940s and one for the 1950s – with images and explanations of their significance. The idea is that the cards can be used as a starting point for prompting conversations between older and younger generations.

[Moving Here](#) is a website hosted by The National Archives, which brings together fascinating archival material related to immigration to England over the past 200 years. The site encourages users to contribute their own stories of migrating to England, and now holds a large collection of stories from a wide range of community groups.

[Sporting Memories Network](#): This organisation promotes the use of sporting memories to improve the wellbeing of people through conversation and reminiscence. Its website contains a huge collection of sporting memories contributed from a wide range of people.

M.3.2 Preparation before embarking on memory activities

Professor Bob Woods explains the value of reminiscence in Pam Schweitzer's publication "Reminiscence in Dementia Care" (Schweitzer,1998): "Communication is (at least) a two way process, and it is argued that dementia carers carrying out reminiscence work convey a powerful message to people with dementia:

- We value you as a person
- We are interested in you as an individual
- We respect you and your experience
- You know things we can never know
- When we know you better, the gaps in our understanding become less

Carers mustn't forget that the person with dementia has much to tell them:

- I am an individual
- My life story is part and parcel of who I am
- There is more, much more, to me than what you see now: this is the tip of the iceberg
- I have something to contribute now
- I am alive as a social being
- Once, I was at a similar stage of life to you

Reminiscence helps by using the past to re-establish these feelings, making the person feel good about who they are (Schweitzer,1998)."

M.3.2.1 Important skills and techniques for carrying out reminiscence work

In order to put in practice these principles when doing reminiscence work with a dementia patient, carers should acquire and practise the following skills and techniques, within a consistent approach in order to have the best impact on the sufferers. This is an extract of the Best Practice Manual on Creative Reminiscence and Life Story Work published by the Reminiscence Network Northern Ireland. See more in Annex M3.2 Best Practice Manual.

Skills/ techniques	Approach	Impact on patients
Active listening	Demonstrate you have heard and understood by asking "Have I got this right?"	Person feels valued, important.
Genuine curiosity	Read nonverbal body language and ensure your facial expressions show you are listening. Above all be non-judgemental. Never underestimate genuine interest, which can be shown through your tone of voice, pace, eye contact etc.	Builds a warm, caring atmosphere. Participants feel valued and more confident.
Observation and assessment	Using activities, assess the skills and areas of need for participants – adapt your programme to meet those needs and overcome barriers which may prevent participants from participating. Ensure your activities are suited to the group or individual you are working with.	Enhanced participation. Self-esteem and confidence raised by success.



Pacing sessions	In your speech match the pace of the participants, allowing time for participants to gather their thoughts.	Not rushed, given time to think and respond. Feel able to participate.
Allowing emotions but being sensitive and empathetic	Allow silences – don't rush to fill them, as someone may be formulating their response. Prompt when appropriate, ask open-ended questions but don't barrage them with questions. Tears can be cathartic; sometimes someone just needs to tell their story to feel heard. Don't ask participants insensitive questions or intrude into details of memories they do not want to discuss.	Can help reframe difficulties from past in present.
Motivating your group	Use your imagination, sense of humour, skills and creativity to draw people into your group.	Stimulated and happy to engage. Enjoying the session and feeling part of something.
Being flexible	Gauge the feeling of the group – if they need stimulation or a boost of energy do an activity that allows for that. Have plans and activity ideas but try not to prescribe - never be afraid to go with the topic the group may bring or something they are focused on that day. The session belongs to the participants.	Valued as active participants. Enabled to engage, worthy, valued.
Creative outcomes	Creating a product from the memories shared is a lovely legacy but the work towards the product should not detract from the quality and value of the reminiscence work. The process is more important than the product.	A product can be used to engage with family, future carers and can prove useful during periods of transition.
Ability to monitor and evaluate	After each session look at it critically – what would I do again? How would I amend certain activities to suit? What created a breakthrough? How could I have approached something differently to have a greater success?	



Sharing and seeking support	Seek out help and support with like-minded staff to work with, share ideas, discuss issues and possibilities.	
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M.3.2.2 Preparation through patients' personal portfolios

In order to support the reminiscence process of a dementia sufferer, we have already mentioned that a personal portfolio is necessary. The elaboration of a portfolio was described in Module 2 (This is me questionnaire). A patient's portfolio can range from a detailed questionnaire, completed by the carer in cooperation with the patient and their family, to a complex biography work, providing much more detail about the patient. The richer the portfolio, the more detailed reminiscence activities will be. This is, however, heavily dependent on the use that the carers will make of the portfolio.

Carers should first go through the portfolio and identify all the elements that could be used in triggering memories in a non-direct, smooth approach.

What information should a carer look for in a portfolio?

- Name, and more importantly preferred form of name, or even nickname.
- Area, where the person has lived (stories related to that area)
- Closest family members, friends, carer
- Personal preferences / daily routines
- Family background
- Current and past interests, jobs and visited places
- Food preferences
- Things that may worry or upset the person
- Things that help the person feel better
- Potential decline in sensorial perception (sight, hearing...)
- Communication: language, sign indication, behaviour
- Any favourite things not mentioned previously

M.3.3 Physical Memory Box

For loved ones, parents or seniors with dementia, a memory box can help recall events and people from the past. These memories can stimulate the senior, prompting conversation with loved ones.

Whether a family photo, newspaper clipping or other prop; memory boxes hold items that bring us back to a moment in time that we hold dear. When a senior who has dementia opens a memory box, it can stir thoughts of happy moments in life and give that person something to talk about.

M.3.3.1 How to create a physical Memory Box?

Reasons to Create a Memory Box for dementia



Memory boxes can link loved ones to their identity, with keepsakes emphasizing an overall holiday, person or theme that lifts the senior's spirit. Though it will take time to find which keepsakes to store in the memory box, it is worth the effort.

Here are five reasons to make a memory box for a senior loved one with Alzheimer's:

- Exercise, touch and other senses used in the creation of a memory box will become more important for a loved one to rely on as dementia progresses.
- Fond memories of a senior's history, personal interests and youth can be explored.
- Memory boxes can inspire conversation with caregivers, children or grandchildren.
- More insight into your loved one and their past will be gained. When you search for keepsakes to include in a memory box, you may find special items you did not realize the senior still had or was interested in.
- Spurred creativity from the creation of a memory box. The senior may be inspired to create another box about a different life event or memory.

Ways to Make a Memory Box

A memory box can be as decorative or as simple as you like. It can be a plastic bin or a shoe box, whichever you prefer. Ideally, it will be easy to access and lift, store a number of items of reasonable shapes and sizes, and fit on your loved one's lap or a small table.

If the memory box has compartments, make sure they suit the senior's dexterity and that the senior can open the memory box easily.

Choosing Keepsakes

Items stored in a memory box should be personal, like a baby's toy or postcard. The memory box should reflect the senior's interests or a moment in history that has meaning to that individual. When you choose keepsakes for the memory box, consider:

- Safety: Avoid heavy or sharp items.
- Significance: Focus on items linked to positive memories.
- Texture: Items should be easy to handle; texture itself can help stir memories.
- Uniqueness: If an item is irreplaceable, leave it out.

Bear in mind that a loved one may not recognize items right away or understand why they were included. So, consider labelling each item with a sticker or tag. You can also list the items on a piece of paper, and write a phrase or sentence about each one.

Here are some suggestions for keepsakes you might include in a senior's memory box:

- A baby toy
- A sports object
- A keychain
- A letter
- A recipe
- Artwork by children or grandchildren
- Dried flowers



- Family photos
- Postcards
- Sheet music
- Holiday souvenirs

You can create multiple memory boxes with different themes with your loved one — maybe one could hold memories of children and another of a favourite hobby, for instance. The keepsakes do not have to fit into a single box.

When you open the memory box with the dementia sufferer, ask the them to share his or her memories with you. You may find that an item that was meant to stir a certain memory brings on another. Or, it could inspire a waterfall of thoughts and conversation, leaving you with new, lasting memories of your patient.

M.3.3.2 Using a physical Memory box in groups

You can make memory boxes tailored towards individuals or a group of people. This could be in a day centres or care homes. If you make one for an individual they can be more personal items in the box. If you are making one for a group of people then use more general items from a particular era or event.

Make a memory box for a day centre or group of people

- Think about the average age of the group before adding the items. Most people of a certain age will have a recollection of the items from a particular era or event.
- Try not to tailor the items to any one individual.
- Use photos showing the trends in clothing, old vehicles, sporting events, historical events such as royal weddings.
- Sweet wrappers, old food tin labels and postcards are ideal.
- Old money such as notes or coins.

When you are using the memory box in a group of people you could take out one item at a time and go around the group asking them individually of a memory they have with the item, how the item was used or if they owned one.

Use of memory boxes by museums and other

An increasing number of museums and experience events are creating memory boxes to be used by visitors with dementia. Making public places dementia friendly is becoming more and more widespread and creating specific memory boxes related to the history of a place or an era is a wonderful way to engage with visiting dementia sufferers.

Carers should enquire what is available in nearby museums and public spaces. Here is an example of a how a museum has gone even further in their attempt to reach a higher number of dementia sufferers:

- “Reading Museum has created an exciting reminiscence service. Designed for older members of the community our Memory Boxes contain objects from the Museum collections that spark recollections.



We have over 40 Memory Boxes covering a range of themes including 1950s Home Life, A Night Out, Royalty, Holiday and Home Medicine. Original objects, photographs, documents, smells and sounds draw the user back in time and place. These boxes are a valuable resource for the local community in Reading. They are available to health and social services professionals for use with individuals or groups.

The response to the Memory Boxes has been very enthusiastic, generating a great deal of pleasure and discussion. The boxes are delivered in partnership with Reading Mobile Library Service.

M.3.4 Digital Memory Box

Based on the physical Memory Box, a new type of Memory Box has emerged recently, as technology like laptops and tablets have become more available and also more user-friendly even for the elderly who have never used any IT equipment. It aims to overcome the limitations of physical objects in a physical box, by replacing them with digital objects, with the same purpose of triggering memories and supporting conversations between the carer and the dementia sufferer. This more modern approach requires creating a positive perception of IT technology and overcoming any potential reluctance to use a tablet or laptop to interact with a digital memory box.

M.3.4.1 Introducing technology to support people with dementia

Making sure everything is ready before you start using technology will mean the session runs smoothly – the person with dementia is not distracted by the unfamiliar.

The right equipment

Whether it's a desktop computer, tablet, mobile phone or laptop, make sure that you have the equipment you need for a particular activity. The 'Dementia and digital' report from the Good Things Foundation said that tablets are the most effective devices to support digital skills. It's helpful to use the technology that the person is most familiar with.

The right connections

Some activities need an internet connection and others don't. It is important to have a reliable broadband connection as it's frustrating if the connection is slow or keeps breaking up. You can get a broadband connection through cables or wireless. Wireless is more flexible but does not always work well in some larger or older buildings. You can also use a 'dongle' which connects an individual computer to the internet as and when you need it. These kinds of solutions don't work so well in areas where mobile phone signals are weak however, and they are usually too slow for downloading videos or films.

If you are using equipment powered by batteries, make sure these are fully charged. Audio speakers might be necessary for those with hearing loss as the volumes on tablets in particular can be quite low.

Taking a person-centred approach

✓ Focus on the person's abilities, not their impairments.	✗ Don't make prior assumptions about what someone can or can't do.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Remember engagement can be at any level, from sensory stimulation from a video, game or piece of music, to writing emails. ✓ Pay attention to each individual's preferences and capabilities. For example, some people may be able to touch type, and others will never have used a keyboard. A person with arthritis may not be able to use a mouse. Past experience and current capacities will affect the person's level of engagement. ✓ Talk out loud about what you are doing as a running commentary keeps people involved. Remember that things that seem obvious to you may not be to people who are unfamiliar with technology. ✓ Make sure carers and family are on board particularly if the technology is going to be used to communicate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Don't take over. Wherever possible, the person with dementia should lead the activity with the carer's support. This can be a fine line in technology but the key is to match the activity with the person's capacity. You might want to initially introduce an iPad by saying 'Have you seen this?' Even if people cannot engage directly with the technology, you can still offer them choices about what you are doing and how. ✗ Don't force the issue if the person is not interested. Engagement will vary from person to person, from day to day and at different times of day. Be led by the person. ✗ Don't go on too long – it is always good to break activities into small steps. As a rule you should limit activities to 20 minutes or less, unless you have a good reason to carry on. ✗ Don't set people up to fail. Don't suggest complicated tasks if people do not have the capacity to engage with them.
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Physical needs, environment and language

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pay attention to health and safety issues – secure any trailing cables, make sure people have comfortable sitting positions, use a cushion with tablet computers as they can be heavy to hold or have in your lap. Take lots of breaks from screens. ✓ Minimise visual clutter on screens, for example, lots of icons on the home screen. ✓ Make sure lighting is good. In particular, avoid screen glare which affects visibility and legibility. Screen reflection can make viewing difficult. ✓ Make the text on the screen large enough to read with strong colour contrast. ✓ Print 'screenshots' (an image of the screen as you see it) so people have a visual reminder of what the screen should look like at any given point. ✓ Consider, if you are using a keyboard, putting sticky labels on the 'space' bar and the 'return' key to remind people what they are for. Do consider covering up any parts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Don't use jargon or inconsistent language. Even some of the main technology terms and ideas can be confusing when they are unfamiliar. Choose an everyday term wherever possible, and stick to using it all the time. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cursor – use 'pointer' • return key – use 'enter' • monitor or VDU – use 'screen' • click – some may understand 'press' or 'tap' • menu – some understand 'list'
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of the keyboard you don't need.	
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Focus on the activity, not the technology

It might be helpful to start a session along the lines of 'Let's play a game/find some music' rather than 'let's use the computer'. It is about what you are trying to achieve, not the fact you are using technology to achieve it. Talking to people about their hobbies and interests is often a good way to start; technology is then a tool that helps that process.

Carer's confidence

Some carers may not feel they have the right skills to support others to learn or use different types of technology. However, there may be people already in the care setting who have IT skills they are happy to share. There are also free online tutorials on YouTube. Families and visitors may have IT skills and kit that they are willing to share.

Patience

Using technology will not suit everyone. Not all staff will feel comfortable and people with dementia may be resistant. It's important that this is not seen as a failure. Technology is only one way of engaging people and someone's interest may fluctuate. Be patient. As with all person-centred care, the wishes and preferences of the individual are paramount.

M.3.4.2 How to create a digital memory box

Technology provides ways to create a full picture of someone's experiences, likes and dislikes – all vital for care that focuses on the person as an individual. Creating a life story and/or a memory box is fundamental to person-centred care.

Supporting the patient

Knowing about the person and their past is the first step. Life story work is recognised as vital to person-centred dementia care. It's a tool to get to know someone, and the better you know someone, the better relationships with staff, family and carers can be. A record of experiences, likes and dislikes is very useful when someone is moving between care settings. A digital record of a life story can be stored and copies of text and images can be printed out.

Technology can support the creation of life stories:

People with more capacity and interest will be able to plan and structure their own life story books and create them with varying degrees of support. Others may engage by making simple choices between images or colour schemes as you create the life story book alongside them. Uncovering someone's life story will take a number of one-to-one sessions and will probably involve family in giving information and providing materials such as photographs.

Useful kit for individual life story work

- A desktop computer, laptop or tablet
- Access to the internet to search for photos or other resources



- A scanner to scan in photos or documents
- A digital camera or smart phone to take new photos or scan old ones
- A printer
- Word processing software (e.g. Microsoft Word) for life story books with an emphasis on text. Presentation software (e.g. Microsoft Powerpoint) is better if you want to use a lot of images or music and video. Free versions of these types of software are available from Libre Office.
- Memory box software. Specialised memory box apps can be useful. Some can be used online for free, others are paid and part of institutional care support. There are also websites with tips on how to carry out life history work.

Hints and tips for life story work

- Use the software that best suits the person with dementia – a life story book or a memory box does not need to be a major production.
- Don't over-focus on the 'finished product' – it's the process that matters.
- Divide the work up into short sessions, perhaps focusing on a particular interest.
- Save work frequently to avoid losing it.
- Remember the importance of text size and colour contrast.
- You can create a 'public' and 'private' version of a life story – one for use with care staff and one for personal use or use only with close family.
- Pay attention to copyright issues if you use photos or music from the web (or any other published source) in a life story book. Not all online material is free to use. For a basic introduction to copyright online, see the BBC WebWise website. Get Safe Online has a section on downloading and file sharing.

Remember

Reminiscence is a common activity with people with dementia. It involves talking about past activities, events and experiences, often using photographs and music as prompts. It can be done individually or in groups. Life story work involves getting to know someone's past, present and future wishes, often to create a permanent digital record or a lifebook.

Technology can be helpful for individual and group reminiscence. Being able to access the internet during a group reminiscence session means you can:

- Ensure the sessions are tailored to the people you are working with
- Get prompts immediately: images, video, audio and music. Research suggests that music in particular is a powerful reminiscence prompt
- Allow the people reminiscing to guide the session by being able to go off on tangents. You don't have to stick to pre-prepared materials or objects.
- Explore anything that interests someone or that arises in conversation.

Useful kit for reminiscence activities

- Access to the internet to search for photos or other resources
- A laptop or tablet for one-to-one sessions
- For small group sessions, a desktop computer and a large screen



- For larger groups, connect the computer to a projector or large screen TV for comfortable viewing
- For group sessions, consider using plug-in speakers, so that the sound quality is better

Hints and tips for group reminiscence activities

- Find a good space with access to the internet and enough room for people to sit comfortably and see the screen or projector image.
- Have materials already downloaded in a folder on the computer or website addresses saved.
- Print material in advance – it gives you somewhere to start and means everyone is not constantly focused on the screen.
- Choose your search terms carefully. Remember the web is full of all kinds of material – some of which you will not want to retrieve!
- Text-heavy websites may not be very stimulating for people. Try searching Google Images or YouTube first. If you are looking for music, try putting 'lyrics' after your search term.

Taking photographs

Creating digital images is inexpensive especially on a smart phone or tablet. With agreement, photographs of people attending the centre can be taken and displayed in a day centre or care home. If they are displayed on a screen, they can be made to change every few seconds, and people are fascinated by them. Images can stimulate memories. For example, photos of family members or places of significance.

M.3.4.3 Examples of digital memory box software/websites

Forget-me-not

One of the results of this European project is the Forget-me-not platform, which is freely accessible to anyone, it has a simple, user-friendly and clean design, allowing carers and early-stage dementia sufferers to create memories to go into their digital memory box. Users can upload and organise memories in the form of preformatted text, images and videos. Any other audio-video content can be uploaded via Youtube and embedded as a memory. It also encourages the account owner to invite collaborators to help them create more memories. These could be carers or family members, allowing even very remote family and friends to take part in the creation of the digital memory box.

Website: www.forgetmenotdigital.com

Book of you

Book of You is a British reminiscence tool similar to Forget-me-not which is designed to create a life story by capturing important life moments. Using words, pictures, music and film, it brings families, friends and carers together sharing life's moments in a simple way making storytelling easy, fun and beneficial. The main difference with Forget-me-not is that Book of you is paid software at £25 per book, or £1295 per organisation and then £10 a book. (Prices checked on 7th August 2018)

Website: www.bookofyou.co.uk



Legacy Stories

Legacy Stories is an American mobile device app available on Android and iOS and it is similar to the previous two software solutions, but it is more limited. It allows users to upload or take photos and record a story about the photo. There is a free limited account and another unlimited account for \$295.

Website: www.legacystories.org

Memory Box!

Memory box! is a Swedish smartphone application that aims to serve as a memory aid and a conversation inspiration to support relatives and caregivers of those living with dementia. It contains visual, musical and written tips for conversations and memory support of famous events and topics during the 20th century. The application is available in iOS and Android. This application does NOT allow you to upload your own memories, but it is a good support for group reminiscence therapy using common and not personal memories.

OTHER EXAMPLES FROM OTHER COUNTRIES???

M.3.5 Physical v. Digital Memory Boxes: comparison

Both physical and digital memory boxes have their legitimate place in reminiscence therapy, depending on the care setting, the individual dementia sufferers, as well as personal preferences. The following table attempts to sum up the relative advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

	Physical Memory Box	Digital Memory Box
<u>Sensory perception</u>	Touch, smell and taste can be experienced only with objects in a physical memory box. These senses can provoke memories even in much later stages of dementia. Links to physical memory can be activated by close contact with physical objects.	Hearing and vision are the dominant senses perceiving digital memories by looking at photos, watching videos, reading text or listening to recordings. Some digital memories will be more suitable for early stages (text, video), other digital memories can work also in later stages (photo, sound)
<u>Storage</u>	Storage of physical objects requires physical space, which can be limited.	Virtual storage can be unlimited, depending on the platform or media used for the digital memory box.
<u>Accessibility</u>	Physical objects can be physically handled and are more easily recognisable by an elderly person. They can, however, deteriorate with time, or can be unavailable in their physical form anymore.	Virtual objects are stored in the form of photos or videos, they are just representations of the physical object. They are, however, timeless and can be retrieved from archives even when they have already physically disappeared.
<u>Overcoming distance</u>	If a required physical object is located with family on the other side of the planet, it would be difficult or costly to send it to the dementia sufferer.	A virtual representation of a remote object can reach the dementia sufferer within second in the form of a photo or recording.



<u>Play factor</u>	Some memories will be triggered by the physical play with an object, even if the cognitive perception is lost. Childhood toys or objects will have a better effect on memory in a physical form.	Some memories will be prompted better when a video or a sound recording are played – a favourite film, a wedding dance song, etc.
<u>Technical expertise</u>	No technical expertise is required to handle objects in a physical memory box. This approach is possible even at a very advanced stage of dementia, as long as the person can hold an object.	Little technical expertise is required to handle a digital memory box, but carer's support is needed to create the individual digital memories. This approach is more suitable for early stages of dementia, but not impossible at later stages.
<u>Mobility</u>	A physical memory box can be as small or as big as desired, but will still be bulkier and more difficult to move physically than a tablet.	A digital memory box is accessed through any device with an internet connection, so it doesn't even need to be moved as it's virtual and accessible from anywhere.
<u>Physical activities</u>	Physical objects can trigger memories and especially if it's a toy or a tool, they can lead to physical activities, allowing motor skills to trigger further memories.	Virtual objects cannot be handled, but a video, or a piece of favourite music can lead to singing, or even dancing.
<u>Communication</u>	Physical memory boxes can be used in one-on-one or group reminiscence sessions, which then prompt the people with dementia to speak and relate to each other.	Digital memory boxes have the same ability to be used in one-on-one or group reminiscence sessions, but can also be used support for remote communication with loved ones, who are far away. A reminiscence session can be followed by a online call with a loved one, who cannot be physically present.

As we have seen, both approaches to creating and using a memory box have their place in reminiscence therapy and it's up to the carers and ultimately the dementia sufferers to decide how to combine them for best results. Further reading is available in annex M3.5 Physical v. Digital Memories.