

How to use Cognitive Care Kit Materials

Based on the DementiAbility Method by Gail Elliot and DementiAbility Enterprises

- **Follow a set routine.** This helps condition a positive response to working with the kits and adds predictability to the day.
- **Announce who you are and what you are going to do today.** By providing the information needed, you are helping support declarative memory.
- **Use the WOW method of determining what activities to do.** Who is the person, past and present? Observe their behaviours and reactions. What activity will you choose?
- **You are the start button.** Take the initiative to show how to do a task instead of waiting for an indication of interest or action.
- **Praise the process** instead of focusing on the result. Any engagement is a success!

Here's how you can be the start button:

Carry On Reading Series and Marlena Books are designed for reading together or taking turns reading aloud (some kits contain duplicate books to facilitate this).

- Read together and make sure both of you can see the book.
- Help the other reader following along with the words.
- Take turns reading aloud if possible.
- Encourage friends and family to participate in reading a book together.
- Be prepared to engage in whatever conversations may arise from reading the book.

Memory Cascades, Let's Chat books and Conversation cards are conversation starters that can lead to interesting and engaging conversations.

- Select pictures or topics of interest by using the WOW method of knowing the person you are working with.
- Ask questions by providing the answer in the question, such as "Would you rather pet a baby chick or a fluffy kitten?"
- Leave conversation starters on the coffee table so anyone can pick them up and start a conversation.
- Be prepared to follow the conversation wherever it leads. Any engagement is a success.

Laminated workbooks, crosswords, word searches and Sudoku are set up for success by making the answers easy to identify.

- Present the workbook as a word or number puzzle you can work on together.
- Make sure both of you have a marker, and give your partner one if necessary.
- Start finding the answers, talking about what you see and asking for a confirmation of what you find such as, "This looks like the word BIRD to me. Do you think this says BIRD? Let's circle it!"

Colouring Books are excellent and helping practice fine and gross motor skills and they are enjoyable.

- Open the book and start colouring.
- Talk about what you are colouring, such as the beautiful flower.
- Invite participation by saying something like, “Would you like to help me colour the leaves?”
- Give your partner a pencil or place one in their hand. Help guide their hand to the page and use the hand-over-hand method to help them colour.
- Praise the process: “Thank you for helping me colour. This flower is going to be beautiful!”

Sorting games, matching games, word-building games and puzzles are designed to retain gross and fine motor skills as well as keep the brain active. It is important to praise any attempt at helping with these activities, no matter the result.

- Present the game as an exercise in teamwork. Ask for help in solving the puzzle or sorting the item.
- Prepare the task by putting items that match close together so they are easy to recognize.
- Ask for help moving each item over to match the other.
- Increase game difficulty if the opportunity arises.
- Unstructured word-building or matching games allow each person to approach the game differently. Show interest in your partner’s work and ask why they have sorted or matched the pieces that way.
- Use phrases like “thank you for helping me find that piece,” or “I’m so happy we can work together to solve this puzzle.”

Picture Books are beautiful ways to stimulate memories and start conversations.

- Leaf through a book together discussing the pictures and observing any reactions.
- Start conversations about the pictures like, “This reminds me of the beach we used to walk on as kids,” or “I love this shade of blue, but do you think blue cupcakes are nice?”

Around the Home this method can be applied to many tasks and activities. Ask for help with things like:

- Folding towels
- Setting the table
- Sorting and matching socks

Build on your success, great and small, by repeating successful activities.