

# IMPROVISATION DRAMA FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

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Reminiscing with stimuli item



Role play in action



Building the narrative together



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## Background

Two improvisation drama projects, funded by the WeCare Arts Fund, allowed St Joseph's Home to collaborate with a drama educator to design and deliver the following:

- A pilot in 2018 involving twelve nursing home residents with dementia and facilitated by the drama educator and student volunteers
- A second project in early 2019 bringing fifteen residents with and without dementia together. Facilitated by the drama educator, a therapy assistant observed and assisted as part of her preparation to be trained as a future facilitator
- A training component embedded within the second project, consisting of an 18-week module to teach the therapy assistant how to facilitate improvisation drama. Five residents participated as part of her practical training sessions.

## Hallmarks of the improvisation drama framework

- The use of curated stimuli items to trigger memories and facilitate sharing of personal past experiences from participants during the reminiscence component
- Using these collective memories and stories, participants co-develop fictional scenarios and characters to create an improvisation drama piece
- Participants engage in role play, acting out different characters they created, in the final drama piece
- Stimuli items are incorporated within the final drama piece

## Benefits

- Stimuli items engage the senses, encourage discussions and interactions amongst participants
- All memories and stories generated from reminiscing with stimuli items are accepted by all participants, thereby promoting self-confidence
- Co-development of dramatic scenarios validates every participant's views
- Role-playing and pretend-play provides a safe space to share views as characters thus enabling creativity in expression
- Provides an opportunity for participating staff to know residents better.



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