



# Secrets for a Successful Group Activity For Persons with Dementia

**Create a circle with chairs or sit around a large table to foster closeness and recreate a classroom experience. Small groups are best but larger ones can work.**

**Develop a topic for show and tell, discussion, trivia, games or art (examples could be: A holiday theme, local history, trips to exotic locations, fashions, or cooking.)**

**Have the group leader initiate the activity noting his or her enthusiasm and giving some importance to the subject. He or she may then pass around any appropriate objects and lead the group in some trivia questions or friendly debate and conversation. Don't be afraid to be provocative; a question like "Is it a good idea to lend money to close friends?" or "how long should you know each other before getting married?" can evoke a good discussion.**

**Incorporate each person's life story into the topics as much as possible.**

**Stimulate all the senses – bring in items that involve taste, touch, smell, hearing & rich visuals.**

**Don't make the session too lengthy – about 30 to 45 minutes per class or topic. Even if you find lots of information or items to share, you need not use everything in one session.**

**Be flexible. If you plan a topic and the group goes in another direction just go with them! You can always do the planned topic at another time.**

**Be prepared. Even a short amount of time spent researching topics in the library, at a bookstore or on the internet will make everything go better.**

**Let some members read aloud or help plan or implement the group activity.**

**Offer one of your group or class activities for staff. It will be fun and staff will learn more about one another, and it will encourage everyone to think about the importance of creative activities.**

**Consider creating a planning group to research and write future topics. This group could include persons with early dementia as well as family members.**

**Have at least two staff members present. If someone wants to leave do your best to encourage their participation but it is okay if they want to watch from the sidelines!**

**Have fun!**

*Adapted from: **The Best Friends Book of Alzheimer's Activities,**  
**Health Professions Press, 2004**  
[www.bestfriendsapproach.com](http://www.bestfriendsapproach.com)*