CLAY YOUR THOUGHTS

Partner: Innovation Frontiers IKE

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The "Clay Your Thoughts" learning scenario leverages the therapeutic potential of art-making to improve the well-being of individuals with dementia. This initiative provides a unique, multisensory experience where participants engage in a creative journey, inspired by museum tours, to express themselves through the tactile medium of clay. As they shape and mold their thoughts into tangible forms, individuals not only rediscover memories and emotions but also enhance their motor skills and reduce anxiety. This process fosters a sense of achievement, self-expression, and social interaction, thereby enriching their quality of life and connecting them more deeply with others around them.

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SUMMARY TABLE

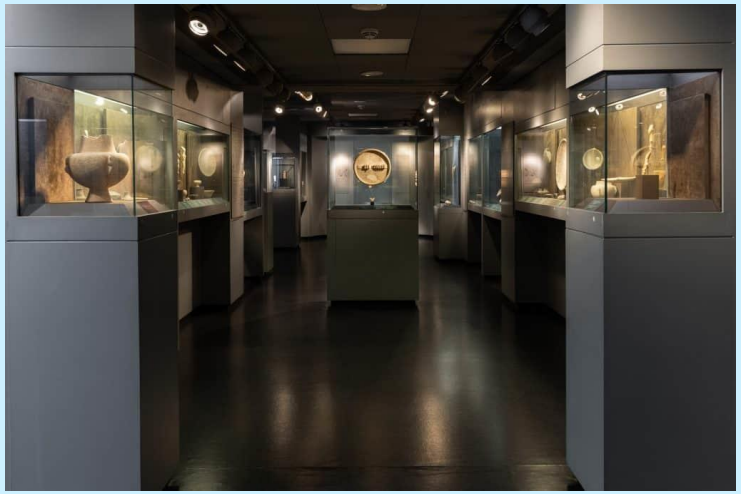
Subject

List all the areas/fields of work that this learning scenario will involve. If this is an interdisciplinary activity, list multiple subjects.

- Art-making,
- Communication,
- Relationships,
- Physical Exercise,
- Creativity,
- Emotional Well-being.

Suitable setting for implementation

Ideally conducted within the museum space or alternatively at a nursing home or center where participants reside.



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Resources used

This engaging activity employs a combination of physical and digital resources to provide a comprehensive art-making experience for individuals with dementia. Key physical materials include sculpting clay and protective aprons for participants. The activity also uses a digital camera to document the creative process and the resulting artworks. For further support and insight, the project leverages online resources that offer guidelines on making museum experiences more accessible to people with dementia.

These include https://www.museumnext.com/article/how-to-make-museums-accessible-to-people-with-dementia/, which provides valuable information on enhancing museum accessibility, and https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/house-of-memories/connect-my-memories, which offers tools and ideas for connecting with people with dementia. Additionally, insights into designing tailored museum programs can be found at https://www.museumnext.com/article/designing-museum-programmes-for-people-with-dementia/. These resources collectively contribute to a well-rounded and effective implementation of the 'Clay Your Thoughts' activity.

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Type of Activity

Art-making activity

Activity Time

Approximately 45 minutes.

Digital material

Camera

Physical material

Clay, Aprons

Storytelling method

Creative Expression through Clay: This method centers around the tactile experience of shaping clay, allowing participants to convey personal stories, emotions, or memories. It is a form of non-verbal storytelling that fosters emotional expression and connection among individuals with dementia.

Aim of the Activity

- Boost self-confidence of people with dementia
- Boost their creativity
- Improve the quality of the Relationships and their communication skills
- Improve their emotional state and wellbeing
- Stimulate their communicative skills through cooperation to create a common object
- Improve their physical state (hands coordination)

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Outcome of the activity

The short-term outcome is the improved creative, emotional, and physical state of the people with dementia. In the long run they will be inspired by their creation(s) and they will be able to revisit through their object(s) their shared experience.

Integration into the methodology

The "Clay Your Thoughts" activity seamlessly integrates into therapeutic methodologies by combining sensory art-making with emotional exploration, particularly beneficial for individuals with dementia. This tactile experience enhances communication, motor skills, and social interaction, fostering a sense of accomplishment and belonging. By using museum exhibits as inspiration, participants engage in a form of expressive therapy, supporting cognitive stimulation and personal expression within a group setting, thereby contributing to an improved quality of life and well-being.

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Possible critical/complicated situations

Reluctance to Participate: There may be issues if individuals with dementia are not inclined to participate in creating objects from clay. They should not be compelled to engage in the activity against their will. However, they should be encouraged to be part of the group activity by selecting an object and sharing their thoughts on the art-making process

Pre-Activities

Select a museum exhibition. Prepare the visit there (transportation, museum tour). It should be a small and easy to understand exhibition. In case of a large exhibition the facilitators should select specific items to guide the participants towards. Facilitators should have obtained the clay beforehand and specified the location where the activity will take place making the necessary arrangements.

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ACTIVITIES

1. **Welcome (5 min)**
   First, people with dementia are gathered together in the museum. The facilitator provides them with the necessary information about the activity.
2. **Museum Tour (5 min)**
   Facilitators will guide the participants through the museum. The tour should be focused on the shapes, the ideas and the feelings generated through the objects of the museum collection. The tour should be short and focused on specific exhibits, so that the participants are not overwhelmed by the variety of objects surrounding them.
3. **Discussion (15 min)**
   After the museum tour the participants will be encouraged to discuss about the museum collection and the specific objects that sparked their interest. At this point they will select which object they will represent through their clay creations. Participants may work individually, in pairs or in larger groups, so, they are asked whether they will work alone or as part of a group that will create a common object. They can be guided to do so based on their interests.
4. **Clay Time (20 min)**
   The main activity location could be in a conference room of the museum, where the selected by the participants items can be projected as a reminder of the source of inspiration. Ideally, the activity could take place in front of the original items in the exhibition spaces, if it is possible. The participants are provided with the clay. There, they are free to proceed to their creations. The facilitators should help them in their creations or if they feel unispired. After the creations are complete, the facilitators should photograph the objects in order to create an image gallery of the creations. Pictures of the original exhibits that inspired the participants could also be added in the image gallery.

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Participants' feedback

Throughout the activity participants can share whether they enjoyed it or not. They can also be given a simplified evaluation list (with drawn facial expressions) where they can evaluate the activity.

AIDA Hubs

Can the activity be transferred to AIDA Hubs?

- Yes

The activity can be transferred to AIDA Hubs by uploading the image gallery respresenting their objects.

Evaluation

Questionnaires can be used for evaluation of the activity. The caregivers can fill in the questionnaires where they can share if the activity is successful and whether they can implement it later on again.

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