Designing and Implementing Arts Programs for People with Dementia (I)

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Possibilities

• Onsite/Offsite
• Organizations/Families
• Art-looking/Art-making
• One time/multiple times
Meet Me at MoMA
Pilot Art-Making Program
Key Considerations

• Goals
• Participants
• Cost and budget
• Spaces and time
• Full-time and part-time staff directing, coordinating, and assisting with the program
• Educators, artists, staff leading programs
• Training
• Sustainability
Working with a Museum

• Contact the *right person* at the museum to meet with and begin the conversation: education staff focusing on accessibility, older adults, or community outreach

• Discuss the benefits of engaging with art for people with dementia

• Discuss the benefits and the challenges of the partnership for you and the museum: *organization’s mission, publicity, expertise, costs, staffing*

• Discuss program structure and potential implementation

• Make a plan to hold workshops for the docents or educators about the basics of dementia and communication strategies for this audience
What is The MoMA Alzheimer's Project?

- A nationwide expansion of the Museum’s outreach program for individuals living with Alzheimer’s disease and their caregivers
- An initiative funded through a four-year grant from MetLife Foundation
The MoMA Alzheimer's Project

• MoMA staff have worked with over 180 different museums
• MoMA staff have connected with over 6,000 people through conferences and trainings
• MoMA staff have presented at 22 different conferences
• Over 60 museums have committed to working with the audience
NYU Evaluation of Meet Me at MoMA

• Overview
  – Evidence-based research study to evaluate the efficacy of Meet Me at MoMA
  – 37 dyads – person with early-stage Alzheimer’s and family caregiver

• Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis
  – Self-rating scales (questionnaire packet + smiley face assessment scale)
  – Observer-rated scales
  – Take-home Evaluation
  – Focus groups
NYU Evaluation Findings

• Caregivers reported fewer emotional problems during the week following their visit
• Both participants reported elevated mood
• Participants with dementia reported an elevation in their self-esteem
• Caregivers reported an increase in social support
Program Evaluation

- Importance of Educator
- Intellectual Stimulation
- Shared Experiences
- Social Interaction
- Accepting Environment
- Emotional Carryover
- Program Extension
Engagement with Art Allows for:

• Participation in a meaningful, intellectual activity and opportunity for personal growth
• A forum for exploration and exchange of ideas without relying on short-term memory
• Opportunity to share personal experiences and access long-term memories
• New insight into others’ ideas and interests
• A means to make connections between individual experience and the world at large
• Social interaction and connection to one’s peers
• A respite, both physically and psychologically
• Emotional carryover and extended conversation
• A learning experience for participants and educators
Gallery Programs

- Inquiry-based discussion
- Thematic explorations
- Art historical information
- 1-1 ½ hour program
- 4-5 works of art
- 15-20 minutes per work
- Scaffolded conversation:
  - Observation
  - Description
  - Interpretation
  - Connection and evaluation
Far Away, So Close
Images of America
In front of the artwork

Oil on canvas, 21 5/8 x 25 5/8" (54.9 x 65.1 cm). Lillie P. Bliss Collection

Observation (looking)

Description (naming what you see)

Interpretation (assigning meaning)

Connection (to other areas of life, to other works of art)

Evaluation (personal opinion)
In front of the artwork

• **Observation**

• **Description**
  - Line and shape
  - Color
  - Composition
  - Material
  - Technique
  - Subject matter

  What colors do you see in the landscape? What about the sky?

  What are some recognizable objects that you see in this painting?

• **Interpretation**
  - Time and place
  - Narrative
  - Mood or psychological effect
  - Artist’s intention
  - Artist’s biographical information
  - Historical and Social Context

  What season is suggested in this scene?

  What is the overall mood that is conveyed in this painting?

• **Connection**
  - Personal life experience
  - Psychological and emotional effect
  - Personal opinion
  - Cultural changes and world events
  - Other artwork and the art historical canon

  Does this look like any place that you have visited?

  Do you like this painting?
Communication and facilitation strategies

• Do not create two planes of conversation

• Make eye contact with participants

• Talk directly to the person with Alzheimer’s disease, even if they are non-verbal

• Be patient and aware of facial expressions, body language, posture and gestures

• Emphasize and define key words

• Try to interpret what is being said and support participants at their own level of functioning
What’s different about working with this audience?

• Repetition necessary
• Transition from open questions to yes/no questions
• Personal connections and narratives encouraged
• Side conversations allowed
• Greater use of nonverbal communication
• Possibility of tangential comments
• Great interpretive freedom—wide range of responses
• Wide range of cognitive abilities within the same group
Scenarios

- A caregiver is too enthusiastic and dominates the discussion
- A person with Alzheimer’s disease makes the same point repeatedly in front of different works
- A person with Alzheimer’s disease brings up topics that are seemingly unrelated to the discussion
- A caregiver and a person with Alzheimer’s disease constantly talk to each other during the group conversation
- There is very little verbal response from the group
Resources

Meet Me: Making Art Accessible to People with Dementia

www.moma.org/meetme
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