Arts-based Discovery focus group for persons with dementia

# ****Purpose:****

To explore Discovery questions with persons with dementia (e.g., What makes you happy? What would make life better for you?) through a guided creative art activity that employs multi-modal forms of communication (i.e., kinesthetic, verbal, visual).

# ****Materials Needed:****

**Recommended Art Materials**

* Various sizes of water colour paper (90+lb weight)
* Water colour paints and brushes
* Crayons
* Oil pastels
* Paper cups (for water)
* Small plastic plates for mixing colour (optional)
* images of popular/familiar artworks (for historical context and visual reference)

**Other Materials:**

* Flip chart
* Regular markers

# ****Instructions:****

1. Set Up and Gathering
   1. Limit group to no more than 8 participants
   2. Seat participants around one large table for easy communication and socializing during the activity
   3. Inquire into the group’s familiarity and experience with creative arts. Assure participants that strong art skills are not necessary to produce a great result.
2. Providing Context
   1. Select 2 - 3 s of popular artwork (preferably a mix of representational and non-representational pieces that have an emotional impact or content) to show to the participants. Facilitators should an informal discussion of each image using the following steps:
      1. Observation: Ask participants to take a few moments to look at the images
      2. Description: Ask participants to list the colours, shapes, images they see
      3. Interpretation: Using the descriptive words provided, piece together with participants what they think they are looking at
      4. Connection to Personal Experience: How does it make them feel?
3. Discovery Discussion
   1. Segue into activity by connecting the artwork discussed to how colour, shapes, images (or lack of) can convey important feelings or memories. Use discussion to inquire about what makes them happy (Discovery discussion)
   2. Write ideas down on chart paper for reference during the art activity
4. Art Demo and Activity: Working with Colour
   1. Connect the two discussions (art and discovery). These discovery ideas will be the themes/ideas for creating artwork around the mood of happiness.
      1. Hint: Introduce them to the materials. Encourage them to touch and try each. Have them think about what colours, shapes, images make them happy.
   2. Model the creative activity:
      1. Start by choosing a paint colour that you associate with happiness, joy, fun and splash it on the blank paper.
      2. Explore other materials (or stick with paints) to add random shapes or lines that can express happiness.
      3. Continue along these lines, perhaps layering in the silhouette of an image (from the list created).
      4. The key here is to emphasize “play”; encourage them to play with the materials, to experiment; to not be too concerned about getting things to look “right”.
   3. Be on hand to help individuals use the materials and guide their explorations of the subject matter and materials.
5. Ensure that a facilitator is on hand to capture digital images of produced work, as well as the comments and ideas that emerged during the Discovery Discussion (part 3) of the exercise.