



MONTESSORI-BASED DEMENTIA PROGRAMMING® ACTIVITY IDEAS

Food Preparation

Getting a person with dementia to help prepare food is a good way to promote eating and swallowing skills. The sight and smell of food being prepared can stimulate interest in tasting the food, and can access memories surrounding dining, cooking and baking. Here are a few examples which can be presented one at a time or across several sessions. Preparing and eating food is often a social activity, and the guide is encouraged to demonstrate the preparation steps and join in eating the results. Food preparation could be done with pairs of participants, completing different steps or taking turns, and then eating together. Be sure you, the guide, and all participants have cleaned your hands before handling food products.

Purpose: Promote interest in eating, development of gross and fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, and reinforce skills necessary for everyday living, such as self-feeding

Materials

- One tray
- Basket to hold food and food preparation items
- Graham crackers, a plastic jar of smooth peanut butter, 2 single serving plastic containers of apple sauce, a plastic shaker with a single serving of cinnamon
- 2 spoons for eating applesauce
- 2 paper plates and 2 paper napkins
- 2 butter knives to spread peanut butter
- A trash receptacle

Set Up

1. Put the tray in front of the participant.
2. Put the basket within easy reach of the participant.

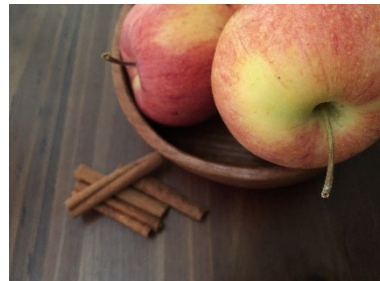


Before conducting these activities, be sure participants have no medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, food allergies, swallowing difficulties) that would prohibit the use of these foods or food preparation materials

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FOOD PREPARATION (continued)

Applesauce Seasoning



Instructions

1. Take out one of the paper plates and place it in front of you. Ask the participant to take out the other paper plate and place it on the tray in front of them, providing assistance as needed.
2. Take out one of the paper napkins and unfold it. Place the napkin on your lap. Ask the participant to take out the other paper napkin, unfold it and place it on their lap.
3. Take out one of the containers of applesauce and place it on the paper plate in front of you. Invite the participant to take out the remaining container of applesauce and place it on the paper plate in front of them.
4. Demonstrate opening the container of applesauce for the participant (This usually involves pulling a tab to tear off a sealed strip of foil or plastic). Have the participant open the other container. Provide assistance as needed.
5. Lift your container of applesauce to your nose and demonstrate smelling it. Invite the participant to smell their applesauce.
6. Ask the participant to remove the shaker of cinnamon from the basket.
7. Pick up the shaker of cinnamon and demonstrate shaking the cinnamon onto your applesauce. Ask the participant if they like cinnamon, and if no negative response is given, invite them to shake some cinnamon on the applesauce (demonstrate with a shaking motion, if necessary).
8. Invite the participant to smell the applesauce now and ask if the cinnamon makes it better.
9. Take out one of the spoons from the basket. Invite the participant to do the same.
10. Demonstrate stirring the cinnamon into your applesauce with your spoon. Invite the participant to do the same, if they wish.
11. Ask the participant if they would like to eat the applesauce now or prepare some more food and then eat. (Follow the lead of the participants. You can always come back to this activity to prepare other food items.)
12. Whenever the applesauce is eaten, show the participant the trash receptacle and place your empty container in it. Ask the participant to follow by putting their empty container in it, as well. (If you can recycle the empty container, be sure to have an appropriate place to put the empty container for that purpose.)



FOOD PREPARATION (continued)

Peanut Butter Spreading

Instructions

1. See Step 1 under Applesauce Seasoning.
2. Remove one of the graham crackers from the package in the basket and place it on the plate in front of you. Invite the participant to remove a graham cracker from the package and place it on their plate.
3. Instruct the participant that you are now going to break your graham cracker in half. Demonstrate breaking your graham cracker into two pieces and putting it on your plate. Ask the participant to then break their cracker into two pieces.
4. Ask the participant to remove the jar of peanut butter from the basket and place it on the tray next to their plate.
5. Start opening the lid of the peanut butter.
6. Invite the participant to finish opening the lid.
7. Pick up one of the butter knives and put some peanut butter on it. Invite the participant to do the same.
8. Spread the peanut butter on one of your pieces of the graham cracker.
9. Invite the participant to take the knife and spread some peanut butter on one of their pieces of the cracker. (You may also place slices of banana on the cracker)
10. Take a bite from your cracker and invite the participant to take a bite from theirs. Continue eating the graham cracker half.
11. Demonstrate putting peanut butter on your remaining graham cracker. Invite the participant to spread peanut butter on their remaining half of cracker. Eat the crackers together.
12. Invite the participant to help you wash the used utensils. (If plastic, have them wipe off the utensils and put them in the recycle bin.)



Extensions

- Work with other foods, such as pouring milk on cereal, slicing canned pears, spreading butter on toast, etc.
- Use a melon scoop to make melon balls.



FOOD PREPARATION (continued)

Horizontal Programming

- Ask the participant to make snacks for others and to help serve them.
- Have the participant identify different scents from jars.

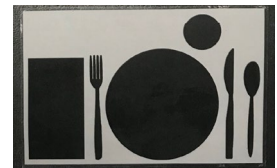
Vertical Programming

DOWNWARD EXTENSION:

- If necessary, you may have to help with some of the physical aspects of food preparation. However, it is important to let the participant do as much as they can.
- Use premixed and precut tubes of cookie dough or biscuits and have the participant place cookies or biscuits on a cookie sheet.
- Use large-handled utensils to make it easier for the participant to grip. (Check with occupational therapists for sources of these restorative devices.)
- Let the participant tear lettuce for salad, or rub fresh herbs in their hands.

UPWARD EXTENSION:

- Have the participant set up for meals using a [placemat template](#).
- GROUP ACTIVITY: Set up teams to follow recipes to make a dish, such as a fruit salad, with each person in charge of a different step.
- Have participants plan a menu for a special dinner.



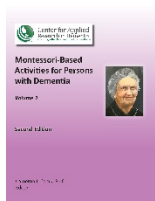
Problems and Solutions

P: Participants cannot manipulate or hold materials.

S: Pair with participants who can manipulate things and have them work as a team.

S: Be their hands and ask their advice as to where to place items, etc.

Find other food preparation activities like these in



Montessori-Based Activities for Persons with Dementia, Volume 1

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