

PRACTICAL LIFE ACTIVITIES



Following are guidelines for developing Practical Life Activities to support independence for people living with dementia or disability.

Practical Life covers a range of motion, grasping and gripping, fine and gross motor abilities including those to maintain balance and coordination. They focus on ensuring that people living with dementia are safe in their environment and they provide the supports required to foster independence. The aim of practical life activities is to maintain skills with the purpose of creating independence by enabling the person to do things themselves such as dressing, eating, carrying, personal care.

These activities assist the person's efforts towards independence and can restore, maintain or enhance the person's movement and coordination. They can also foster interest in being engaged in the environment.

To support independence with activities of daily living it may be that the person slowly progresses in stages to re-learn the skills required. A long-term goal may take some time to achieve. We progress slowly, step by step until the goal is met, e.g., pouring own drinks.

Practical life activities for older people and people with disability depend entirely on what skill the person is losing. Therefore these activities are designed as required for each person.

For example, a person who is losing the ability to scoop their food onto a spoon or fork has a different activity need to a person who is able to scoop their food but cannot lift their hand to their mouth. Both require fine motor skill activities, but these are different.

Observation is one of the most important things to identify where the difficulty is. From this identification, activities can be developed to address the person's specific issue.

Peg activities keep fingers and hands nimble; this is required if a person needs to use chopsticks, forks, knives or spoons to eat their food. To be independent at mealtimes people need to be able to use these utensils. Any activity that maintains these skills can be crucial for skill maintenance.

A peg activity, whilst valuable for the skill of using utensils, will not help with scooping, so if the person has a scooping problem, then an activity that addresses this is required.

If a person has difficulty lifting their fork to their mouth it is highly likely they are also having difficulty combing their hair or shaving so the same activity can help independence in all these areas.

These practical life activities need to be documented on a care plan so that they are seen as part of the person's treatment, not just as an activity.

Montessori for Dementia, Disability and Ageing

Visit our website to find out more about supporting well-being through the four **Key Principles** of Montessori for Dementia, Disability and Ageing: Self-Esteem, Independence, Choice and Meaningful Engagement. Each **Key Principle** is outlined with **Essential Elements** and then has detailed **Guidelines** to assist with implementing these principles within home and care settings.



Website: Information and resource for [Guideline: Practical Life Activities](#)