

Reminiscence Experience

Introduction

The experience of reminiscing on one's past is a proven therapeutic intervention that improves self-esteem as well as feelings of fulfilment and comfort (Klever, 2013). The reminiscence experience involves sessions where the individual develops a personal record of aspects of their life, including memorable events, family members, and important places. The process would have the individual - with help from their family members - collate various prompts such as photos, videos, or important objects that are specific to the individual and represent memories. These prompts form the basis of the experience as they allow the individual to reminisce about their memorable experiences and share their stories with the family members (Alzheimer's Society, 2021). The process of reminiscence also helps keep the individual's memory active as they are challenged to remember and reflect on details of their past (Akhoondzadeh, 2014).

The concept of the reminiscence experience stems from the neuroscience of familiarity or the brain's ability to recognise and "inculcate faces of those we hold dear" (Henderson, 2021). New scientific research discovered that neural cells in the temporal pole of the brain respond when encountered with faces that the individual is personally familiar with (Landi, Viswanathan, Serene, & Freiwald, 2021). This quick recognition response allows the brain to discriminate familiar faces in a crowd. Therefore, the reminiscence experience taps into this neural ability to recognise familiar faces and then recall and discuss important events and memories related to them.

Based on previous research, the feeling of familiarity induced by sessions of reminiscence experience appear to reduce loneliness and increase psychological well-being (Chiang, Chu, & Chang, 2009). Since reminiscing involved discussing the individual's important life events, participants also reported increased feelings of accomplishment. The experience of reminiscing is a helpful tool for individuals and their families to collaboratively build a personalised record of their life story. The process of building these records with photos, videos, and other memorabilia leads to increased socialisation as well as positive discussions between family members.

Intergenerational Reminiscence

“Yesterday’s child is today’s adult and tomorrow’s grandmother or grandfather” (WHO, 2002). This quote emphasises the importance of *intergenerational solidarity*, or the relationship of and the information transfer between older and younger generations. The WHO (2002) report that generational bonding would not only stimulate learning between age groups but also promote active and healthy aging in older adults.

Thus, previous studies have incorporated concepts of intergenerational interaction with reminiscence to develop an established interventional model (Chung, 2009; Gaggioli, 2014). Here, sessions are conducted with older adults reminiscing about their past and building a personal record jointly with the younger persons. Studies suggest that this joint reminiscence approach provides mutual benefits for both older and younger persons (Matheson-Monnet, 2019). For instance, there is better understanding and increased bonding between both parties as well as older adults reporting less loneliness, enhanced well-being, and a better quality of life.

These benefits of intergenerational reminiscence are particularly seen when it is experienced amongst family members. Older adults may feel more comfortable and confident divulging personal information to younger members of their family. In addition to the well-being and emotional benefits of reminiscence, the older adult is presented with the opportunity to discuss their meaningful memories, provide wisdom, and preserve family stories for later generations (Gellar, 2017).

Digital Reminiscence

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to improve access to interventions, therapies, and/or support for older adults has become increasingly popular (Subramaniam & Woods, 2016). For instance, digital reminiscence is an ICT that supports the activity through various multimedia sources: webcams, photos, computer graphics, video, etc... Since content is uploaded onto programs in digital reminiscence, the individual benefits from having a “vehicle to tell their story” (Chonody & Wang, 2013). They also attain a sense of ownership when populating and organising the application with a variety of their personalised digital content (Lazar, Thompson, & Demiris, 2014).

As opposed to traditional methods of reminiscence therapy - often relying on narrative conversation and story-telling - Subramaniam & Woods (2016) reported that the addition of digital content enhanced visual and auditory stimulation leading to increased engagement. Digital content that feels familiar and has multisensorial stimuli (such as playing music with photos or showing videos) help recall of enjoyable memories leading to positive social interaction (Moon & Park,

2020). Hence, it was found that digital reminiscence was more effective in reducing feelings of depression and increasing engagement compared to traditional reminiscence (Moon & Park, 2020).

Reminiscence Experience on the huru Platform

Taken together, this pilot study (MEMORY LANE) aims to utilise digital intergenerational reminiscence to promote well-being, positive mental health, and engagement in adults with cognitive decline. The trial will involve the participant and their family members reminiscing about their past through digital content uploaded on the huru platform. The reminiscence experience will be delivered over weekly sessions. Each session will be centred around a different theme in the participant's life: family photos, important events, places, hobbies, holidays, etc... It is expected that conversations generated through reminiscing will increase social interaction, reduce feelings of isolation, while also strengthening bonds between family members.

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