

Activity: Sensory loss and dementia: an introduction

People with sensory loss often cannot rely on the clues that most of us take for granted as we make sense of our daily lives, such as reading body language or written information, or hearing the sounds of footsteps as someone approaches.

Imagine you have dementia and you cannot see or hear well. How might you feel if:

- You are chatting to a care worker and suddenly realise they are no longer there?
- You are sitting in your bedroom and suddenly someone touches your shoulder?
- You are in a hoist and you are moved into the air without warning?
- You want to walk in the garden; you know it's there, but you can't find the door to get out?
- Suddenly, someone is helping you to get up out of a chair and you don't know who they are or what they want?
- You know there is someone talking to you but you can't work out where they are?
- You are given a menu and you can't read any of it?

These sorts of situations are likely to make you feel distressed, afraid, confused, isolated and disoriented.

For each situation, make a list of the sorts of practical things that care staff could do to help to improve the situation or avoid it happening in the first place.

Trainer's notes

This can be done as a group activity.

First ask participants to read through the feature carefully.

Then, ask participants to close their eyes as you slowly read out loud each of the situations described in the activity.

Then, re-read each situation again – and ask participants to share their reactions first, then their possible solutions. Make a record of these on a flipchart.

What sorts of solutions or strategies are being mentioned repeatedly?

Can participants share any examples of where they've been supporting a person with dementia and come to realise that they may have sensory loss too?