

***Photographic Treatment* ©**

Manual Photo-intervention for elderly people with dementia.

The aim of *Photographic Treatment* © is to positively stimulate the well-being of elderly people with dementia through the therapeutic use of photography.

Photographic Treatment © was developed by visual artist Laurence Aëgerter commissioned by the Foundation Art in Societies. It is based on scientific research. With this project, Aëgerter investigates the therapeutic use of pictures with elderly people with dementia.

The Photo-intervention focuses on creative associations rather than memory. This makes the elderly feel safe and their self-esteem remains intact.

Visual association is a powerful means to stimulate brain activity.

The process of connecting two images requires specific cognitive functions that appeal to associative creativity and imagination.

The Photo-intervention for elderly people with dementia also has a positive influence on the mood of people with dementia.

Target group

For people with early stage to severe dementia.

Group Photo-intervention, up to 12 participants.

Material

-100 photo blocks (15 x 10 x 0.5 cm) with black and white photos

-5 books *Photographic Treatment* ©

- Manual

Website: www.photographictreatment.com

Email: mail@photographictreatment.com

The Photo-intervention

Preparation

Select in advance some examples of combinations that you can easily explain. Make sure you show different types of combinations: combinations based on shape (Italian ice cream and spiral staircase) or form-based connection and combinations based on a more content-related manner (e. g. before and after: caterpillar and butterfly) or an abstract similarity (e. g. hanging as a subject: the mountaineer and the African earring).

Make sure you have drawn a plan with the seats and names of all participants if you don't know them yet. Try to name as many people as possible by their name during the activity.

The implementation

- **Introduction**
Stand where everyone can see and hear you well. Tell the participants about the purpose of the activity: to stimulate the brain and enjoy beautiful photos. Give a few examples of different types of diptych photo combinations (see Preparation).
- After the introduction, divide the blocks over the table.
Make sure that the participants can view them straight on and that they are all evenly distributed among the participants.
- Ask the participants to shift as much as possible with the photo blocks that is the best way to find a matching combination.
This means that you will have to physically place many blocks next to each other to let them try out the combinations.
- Visit all participants individually and help them to create their own combination(s).
Let the participants explain why they combined certain images. If the combinations can be more interesting, you can say that it is a very good starting point, but that they can continue to look for something even better. Repeat examples of the introduction and help the participant find out more.
If someone is very good at it and sitting next to someone who has more difficulty with it, you can ask them to work together. The more interaction between the participants: the better.
- Ask if the combinations that have been found can be displayed in the group and put them separately (e. g. at the place where the introduction was given).
- **Conclusion**
Go back to the place where the introduction was given. Ask everyone for their attention and tell them that everyone has found beautiful combinations.
Start with a participant, appoint and compliment the maker. Ask him/her to describe the combination. If the person fails to express himself/herself sufficiently, formulate on behalf of that person or repeat what has been said. Show the combination briefly around the table so that everyone can see it well.
Preferably discuss at least one combination per participant.
If a second round is possible, mix up the photos and distribute them to the participants again. Motivate the participants to make even better results.

General tips

- Make sure everyone can see and hear you well during the introduction, activity and conclusion.
- Do the introduction with few words and talk as calmly as possible; the information is processed more slowly on people with dementia. Do not be afraid to repeat.
- Check that the participants understand what the intention is.
- Don't stand next to a participant; that assumes you are in a hurry. Prefer to sit next to the participant.
- Try to immediately respond to any combinations found, because a little later the participant may have forgotten it again.
- Give the participant time to react.
- Give a lot of encouragement and as many compliments as possible. It is important that the participant feels comfortable.
- Tell them that everyone can do this. You don't necessarily have to be creative in order to make combinations. It's not easy, but exercise brings art.

Variations in the group activity

- Ask the participants to give their combinations a title.
- Give a title created by yourself and ask the participants to look for combinations that can function as illustrations for a small story. In the title, 'The temptation', for example, the photo of a mother and a kitten plus the picture of fried fish pieces in a plastic container could provide a story.

In this way, many more variations can be generated.