

Your story, your way

Stories and poetry

30–60 minutes

(depending on the access needs, wellbeing, and interest of each participant)

You will need:

A tablet or laptop, with Zoom app downloaded

Wi-Fi connection

A pen and paper, or a flipchart or whiteboard

Images of seasons (laminated if possible)

A multi coloured heart made out of cardboard (laminated if possible)

A handout containing symbols representing a range of themes and topics such as food, music, travel (laminated if possible)

One-to-one Dementia-friendly



Engaging
Interactive
Celebratory

Credit:

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Developed in partnership with Imperial College Healthcare Trust, Dementia Care Team.

In this one-to-one activity participants create a story or poem that they can keep and share with family and friends. It is designed to be relaxed, supportive and flexible to meet the needs and feelings of everybody who takes part.

To prepare:

This activity is designed to take place online but works equally well in a face-to-face setting – if you are working online you may want to provide your participant with physical materials before the activity. Equally you could share these online during the activity.

To begin:

Start by introducing yourself and explain that you are going to spend the next half an hour writing a story or poem together.

Then present a multi-coloured heart to the person that you are working with. This could be on a laminated card or something that you share on screen. *What colour do they feel best represents their day?* It will help if you get the ball rolling by sharing how you feel. For example, *'I feel yellow today because the sun is shining and that makes me feel happy and content'*. This will set a calm and focused tone for the task and help you to get a sense how the participant might be feeling and therefore how they may choose to participate in the activity.

Explain that throughout the activity you will write their thoughts and ideas down – try to record their words exactly rather than changing them as you note them down. You can do this on a piece of paper or on a whiteboard or flipchart so that the person you are working with can see it too.

Step one:

Take the colour that has been chosen and ask your participant if it reminds them of a season. It may help to provide a selection of colourful images of each season so that you can look at the images together and decide where the colour is best represented. *Is the season they have chosen their favourite?* This could serve as a gentle introduction for their own thoughts on their favourite season and any stories that they'd like to share.

Finally, invite them to choose their favourite picture of the season that they are thinking about. *What is it about that picture that drew them to it? What do they like about it?*





Step two:

Explain that you are going to look at the picture that they have chosen and think about it in more detail. *Can they think of activities and topics that are inspired by the image?*

It can help if you have a handout with a range of symbols representing different topics. These could be things like a knife and fork for food, a treble clef for music, a map for places, and a space for anything else that you come up with together.

Use these symbols to prompt sharing stories and ideas on different subjects. For example, *What kind of music does the picture make them think of? What kind of food? What place does it look like? What could you do in that place?* Another good way to explore the image is to use the senses as a starting point – *What could you hear, see, smell, feel, taste in that place?*

Once again, as stories and ideas are shared, jot them down on a piece of paper, or a whiteboard or flipchart.

To finish:

Read back the notes you have made to capture the stories and conversations during the session. If you have written these as they were said, the list that you have created should feel like a spoken word poem or story. Ask the person you have worked with what they like about the poem. *What surprises them? Which is their favourite part? Can you create a name for it together?*

You could also:

After the session why not type up the writing that you have created alongside the images that you used to inspire it. You can then print this out and provide a copy for the participant.

It can also be nice to record somebody reading their piece and make a mini film that includes the images that you looked at as inspiration.

