

Walking Barefoot

When was the last time the people you look after at the later stages of dementia felt the soil or the grass beneath their toes? We take for granted running to the washing line barefoot, or feeling sand between our toes on the beach. This activity stimulates the sensation of touch, can be adapted for any level of dementia, and is best suited to being a one-to-one experience.



You Will Need

- Grass
- Cut grass or artificial lawn if indoors

Top Tips

- Enter the world of this person.
- Ensure you use direct eye contact, facial expressions and touch.
- Use one-word explanations and commands.
- Do not over-stimulate them.
- Demonstrate movement by assisting them.

Setting Up

Have all the items you need readily available, ensure the person can see the item when you are talking about it.

When speaking to the person, maintain direct eye contact with them.

Throughout the activity, use touch and the person's name to sustain the social contact.

Other Ideas

One item should be used per activity, so as not to overstimulate.

Other things you could use are a tray of sand, soil or the pavement.

Have a basket full of grass cuttings and encourage the person to run their hand through it.

Lightly sprinkle the grass over the hand or bury their hand in the cuttings to provide different sensations with the same object.

Nature

Awareness

Senses

Surroundings

Interaction

What To Say And Do

- Introduce yourself in a calm manner, and be in direct eye contact of the person.
- Explain that they are going to feel the grass beneath their toes.
- If you are outdoors, allow the person time to feel the fresh air on their skin and look around at the environment.
- Ensure the person is sat down on a chair or in their wheelchair.
- Put your hand on the person's foot and explain "Shoes off".
- Gently take the person's shoes and socks off, keeping regular eye contact and smiling.
- Put the person's shoes out of direct eye contact, so they can focus on you.
- Making sure the footplates of the wheelchair are out of the way, place one of their feet at a time on to the grass. Say the word "Feel".
- Give them a moment to absorb the sensations of the texture and the coldness.
- Use one describing word, such as cold, soft, tickley etc.
- Support the person's foot and lift their heel up and down. Saying the word 'Foot'.
- Allow the person to feel the difference in pressure on the grass.
- Placing your hand on the back of their calf say "Walking" and support their legs by lifting them up and down. Alternate between each leg to give the sense of a walking movement.
- If you are indoors, do the same on artificial lawn or a roll of turf from a local garden centre.



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