

## Activity Options: Simple Pleasures

**Simple Pleasures** are a group of multilevel sensorimotor programs that may be used for several purposes such as reducing

- **Passive behaviors:** sitting without active engagement with the environment or others,
- **Boredom:** behavior that suggests a craving for things to touch or interact with), or
- **Agitation:** restlessness, wandering, and physically or verbally non-aggressive behaviors.

Activities are designed to be used one-to-one, or in small groups (no more than 5). Length of the intervention ranges from 5 to 45 minutes depending on the attention span of the person and his/her level of interest in the item. All items have all been tested for safety, and may be crafted by volunteers following directions that are provided for online at no cost at

<http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/conditions/dementia/edge/interventions/simple/index.htm>

Indications for using selected Simple Pleasures, along with brief descriptions of items are described briefly below.

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### AGITATED WANDERING

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Simple Pleasures Item	Made from	Common Cues
Wanderer’s cart	PVC pipe and utility wheels are combined with a wooden base and fitted to make a multi-level cart that holds other Simple Pleasure items; add soft pockets on sides that are filled with interesting items; place a mealtime tray on top to hold finger foods.	Encourage wandering resident to take the cart with him/her and hand out items to others, eat food on tray, or share food with others.  Engage in discussion: “Where did you go? What kind of games do you have on your cart?”
Table ball game	A box made of plywood is drilled with holes to “catch” tennis balls that are rolled toward the holes. A backboard and sides encourage rolling balls in different ways to “sink” them in the hole.	“Here is a tennis ball we are going to use.” Demonstrate: Roll the ball down the table and try to get it in the holes, then “Now you try.” Discuss: “Did you ever bowl? Did you play games at a carnival?”
Sensory wall hangings	Interesting fabrics are decorated with pockets filled with safe and interesting “treasures,” ribbons to tie, and other tactilely interesting objects. Wall hangings are mounted and hung or may be laid on a table to be explored and examined	Encourage wandering resident to stop and explore the hanging. “Look at nice soft wall. It has pockets with things inside.” Demonstrate: Touch fabrics, tie ribbons, open pocket and look inside. “How does it feel to you? What was in the pocket?”

Look inside purses  
& fishing boxes

A large print label that says “Look Inside” is placed on purses, briefcases, or fishing tackle boxes that are filled with safe and interesting items that relate to the theme.

“Here is a purse (or briefcase or tackle box). Let’s see what’s inside!”

Demonstrate how to open the purse, and look at items inside.

“Did you carry a purse? What did you keep in your purse?”

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## **VOCALIZATIONS**

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Wave machine

Made from a salad dressing bottle that is filled with combination of small sea shells, glitter, baby oil and colored water and taped shut with electrical tape

Get their attention: “Look at this colorful bottle!” then demonstrate, tipping the bottle back and forth or shaking it. Cue to start: “Now you try.” Discuss: “Does it remind you of the ocean?”

Polar fleece hot water bottle

Make a soft fleece cover for a hot water bottle. Fill the hot water bottle with warm (not hot) tap water. Be sure to get an order for use of heat!

Offer when the person is first getting upset: “I have something warm and soft for you to hold.” Encourage to hold the hot water bottle in both hands and close to their body.

Hand muff

Made of soft polar fleece exterior with soft satin lining and filled with washable batting.

“This is a homemade muff to warm your hands. Put your hands in here. Let your hands rest a few minutes.”

“Did you ever have a muff when you were a child?”

Sensory vest

Simple, untailored vests are made using a combination of brightly colored fabrics (e.g. silky, velvety, fleecy, textured) with pockets placed to hold additional safe sensory items that may be touched or held.

“This is a vest that you can wear and that will keep you nice and warm.”

Demonstrate by putting the vest on and having the resident feel it and look in the pockets.

“Now you try. How does the vest feel? Did you used to wear a vest?”

Sensory tablecloth

Each of four sections of a tablecloth is decorated with tactilely interesting items such as

“This is a special table cloth that has lots of pockets with treasures inside.”

	different fabrics, velcro closure pockets filled with small “treasures,” bows or ribbons to tie, and other interesting sensory items to touch and explore.	Demonstrate opening a pocket and showing an item or two; “Now you open a pocket and see what is inside.” “Did you have a table cloth on your kitchen table? What was it made of? Was it a gift?”
Stuffed fish & butterflies	Sewn in shapes from soft materials and stuffed with filling to make comforting items to hold.	“This is a really soft butterfly. Would you like to take it with you?” “Look what the volunteers made! It’s a fish of some sort. Do you like the colors?”

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## **HAND RESTLESSNESS**

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Wave machine, Hand muff, Sensory vest, Sensory table cloth, Look inside purse and fishing box	As described above	As described above
Home decorator books	Large cardboard booklets are made of fabric, wallpaper, paint, and other decorating samples. Books can be made for every room in the house.	“Here is a book with samples of rugs and wallpaper and other things you can use to decorate a room with.” “Did you own a home? How many rooms did it have? Who did the decorating at your house?”
Sewing cards	Bond fabrics to the center of cardboard rectangles that are punched with holes along the edge. Dip ends of colored yarn in glue and let dry to create a “needle” will allow yarn to be threaded in and out of holes in the card.	“Here is some thread you can sew with.” Demonstrate how to put the yarn in and of the holes in the card. “Now you try.” “Who taught you to sew? Which card to you like the best?”
Stress balls	Fill a round balloon with millet seed using a cut-off plastic pop bottle as a siphon. Tie the first balloon then slip a second balloon over the top to hide the knot and tie again.	“Here is a ball you can squeeze without breaking.” Demonstrate squeezing, flattening, or rolling the ball toward a safe target.

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“Which color do you like best?  
Would you like to learn to make  
these?”

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**PASSIVITY**

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Sensory table cloth, stress  
balls

As described above

As described above

Picture dominoes

Brightly colored pictures with  
words are mounted with glue to  
wood rectangles to create a set of  
19 picture dominoes.

“Here are some dominoes with  
different pictures on them.”  
Demonstrate how pictures can be  
matched, stacked, or sorted.  
“Did you play dominoes when  
you were younger? Do you  
remember how to score the game  
of dominoes?”

Tether ball game

Create a multi-fabric sack made  
of different fabrics, such as  
fleece, velour, or other textured  
materials that are held with a  
drawstring over a round balloon  
that is inflated fill the sack.  
Suspend the ball with a strong  
string and hang from the ceiling.

“Here is a ball that is soft and fun  
to play with.”  
Demonstrate by hitting the ball  
single-handed and then with both  
hands, then return to the resident.  
“Now you try to hit the ball.”  
“What kind of games did you  
play when you were a child? Did  
you ever play volleyball?”

Sensory stimulation box

A plastic video box is outfitted  
with a light and noisemaker that  
respond to pushing exterior  
buttons. The box top is labeled  
(e.g., Push button) and secured  
with tape to assure components  
inside the box are not accessible  
by users.

“Look at this little box. You can  
push buttons and turn it on.”  
Demonstrate by pushing the  
button that lights the light and  
rings the buzzer.  
“Can you turn on the light? Try  
it!”

Message magnets

Cut out words or phrases from  
magazines such as “I am,” glue  
to magnet sheeting, and cover  
with transparent tape. Magnets  
may be sorted, stacked or stuck  
to a cookie sheet to answer  
questions or make statements.

Demonstrate making a sentence:  
“I am” and “tired.”  
“Now you decide how to finish  
the sentence.” (I am...)