

Two sample Reminiscence sessions from the Finland, the first led by Leonie Hohenthal-Antin and the second by Varpu Vistala

Finland was not funded to participate in the Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today Training project owing to pressure on Lifelong Learning Programme funds in Finland. Nevertheless, we have remained involved in the European Reminiscence Network, attending meetings and continuing the work we began in the previous project. Leonie Hohenthal-Antin has offered many training courses in reminiscence arts across Finland and begun a new Training the trainers scheme, which is operating across the country.

1. Celebrating Finnish culture:

The 5th February is the birthday of our national poet J.L. Runeberg, who wrote our national song. 6th February is the national day of Samie culture in Lapland. So the session was built by Leonie around these themes.

1. Leonie brought in books and pictures about J.L. Runeberg. She asked people to close their eyes and read the whole poem (national song) 'OUR COUNTRY'.
2. She brought old magazines, pictures from, for instance, famous sprinters (Paavo Nurmi), famous sportsmen from Eastern Finland, Kotka etc., and old postcards, landscapes featuring the four seasons, poems etc. She invited families to make a collage: 'MY FINLAND'
3. It was nice to see, how eager the men with dementia were to build a collage about sportsmen who had meant a lot to them. They began to remember, for example, how they had seen them running in 1952.
4. Families took their reminiscence art pieces home and told how inspiring thing it was to remember, what Finland means to them and which memories are connected to the Finnish psyche.
5. There is a famous sentence in Finland: "He speaks like Runeberg", which means that he speaks well and much. Runeberg was an excellent speaker. Families remembered, when they had had to speak in public, for example making a wedding speech. One of the family carers made a spontaneous speech to the group there and then.
6. Runeberg wrote many poems and we tried to list and remember them. Then we spoke about, who had read these poems during their school days or on different festivals.
7. Then Leonie gave each one a piece of paper and they wrote down rhyming words): eye/try, run/sun.... Then Leonie mixed up the papers and gave one to each couple and they had to be like Runeberg and write down new poems. The family carers read aloud their poems. They were really creative.
8. Then everyone who remembered a poem, was invited to read it.
9. There was also reference to the Lapland theme: Leonie had brought postcards from Lapland and the couples took one and shared their memories of visiting Lapland.

We also had a coffee break with special cakes called Runeberg cake. Runeberg's wife Frederika had invented the cake. And we also had pancakes with jam made from berries from Lapland.

2. A session on sporting activity and other outdoor pursuits.

We opened a new exhibition in the Memory House entitled "The joy of moving and sport yesterday and today". This inspired us to explore the theme with our group.

We used old sporting objects as triggers and everyone told his or her story based upon the chosen object.

We made together as a team a collage about different kind of sport and healthy activity. We used old magazines and photos and everyone told about the chosen picture, why the picture was attractive. The picture reminded us of sports in childhood or of sport dreams.

The other collage told about the positive things which had influenced the quality of life of participants. They chose pictures which they related to and told about nature, friendship, love, movement and food. The group named it THE GOOD THINGS OF LIFE. Every year we have held a picnic for the group and this is now part of our tradition. It is held in late May in the Sea Park of Katarina, which is a really naturally beautiful and enjoyable place. There we play lot of games: petanque, mini croquet and a traditional Finnish game named M \ddot{o} lkky. Everyone takes part in the games and the winner gets a crown of flowers. We also sing spring and summer songs and of course we enjoy picnic food, grilled sausages, coffee and cakes.

For more information visit: www.rememberingyesterday.eu/RYCTT/finland