

# Creative & Sensory Activities

for people and families affected by dementia

## Booklet 2

Contributions by friends of The Arts and Dementia Doctoral Training Centre  
and The Association for Dementia Studies, University of Worcester



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## **Contributors**

Richard Coaten, Becky Dowson, David Prytherch, Rhian Sutcliffe, Ruby Swift, and Robin Whitmore.

Curated by Ruby Swift, TAnDem Scholar and Research Associate

## **Acknowledgements**

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The activities contained in this booklet are practice-based suggestions from arts practitioners and are general advice only. They should be utilised in consideration of individual capabilities and needs, monitoring each person with dementia on an ongoing and individual basis to find the best response. If an activity causes distress, it is important to stop the activity and provide emotional support.

## **Address for correspondence**

Association for Dementia Studies

University of Worcester

Henwick Grove

Worcester

WR2 6AJ

Tel: +44 (0) 1905 542531

Email: [dementia@worc.ac.uk](mailto:dementia@worc.ac.uk)

# Using this Booklet

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The arts and sensory activities contained in this booklet are intended for people with dementia and their families and carers to share together at home. They are a starting point for shared time together; to explore and have fun. Feel free to make them your own and let your imagination guide you. Please consider whether the materials and activities are safe, appropriate and manageable for everyone taking part.

This booklet is the second of a two-part series. Booklet 1 contains further activities to share.

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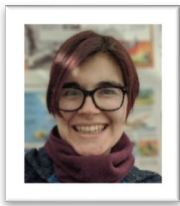
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# Contributors

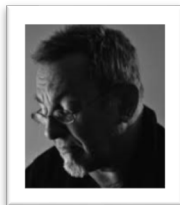
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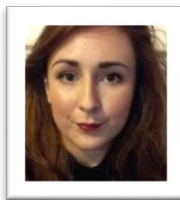
**Richard Coaten** is a leading UK specialist in movement and dance-based work with older people with memory problems and their carers.



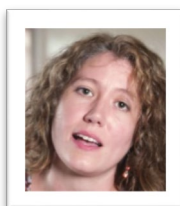
**Becky Dowson** is a music therapist, research associate and completed her PhD with TAnDem Doctoral Training Centre.



**David Prytherch** is a glass engraver/sculptor, teacher of Art and Design, and researcher of Haptics and Computer Interface Design.



**Rhian Sutcliffe** is a Community Artist delivering creative arts workshops, collaborating with Paper Birch and Imperial Charity.



**Ruby Swift** is a TAnDem PhD student, research associate and singing for health facilitator.

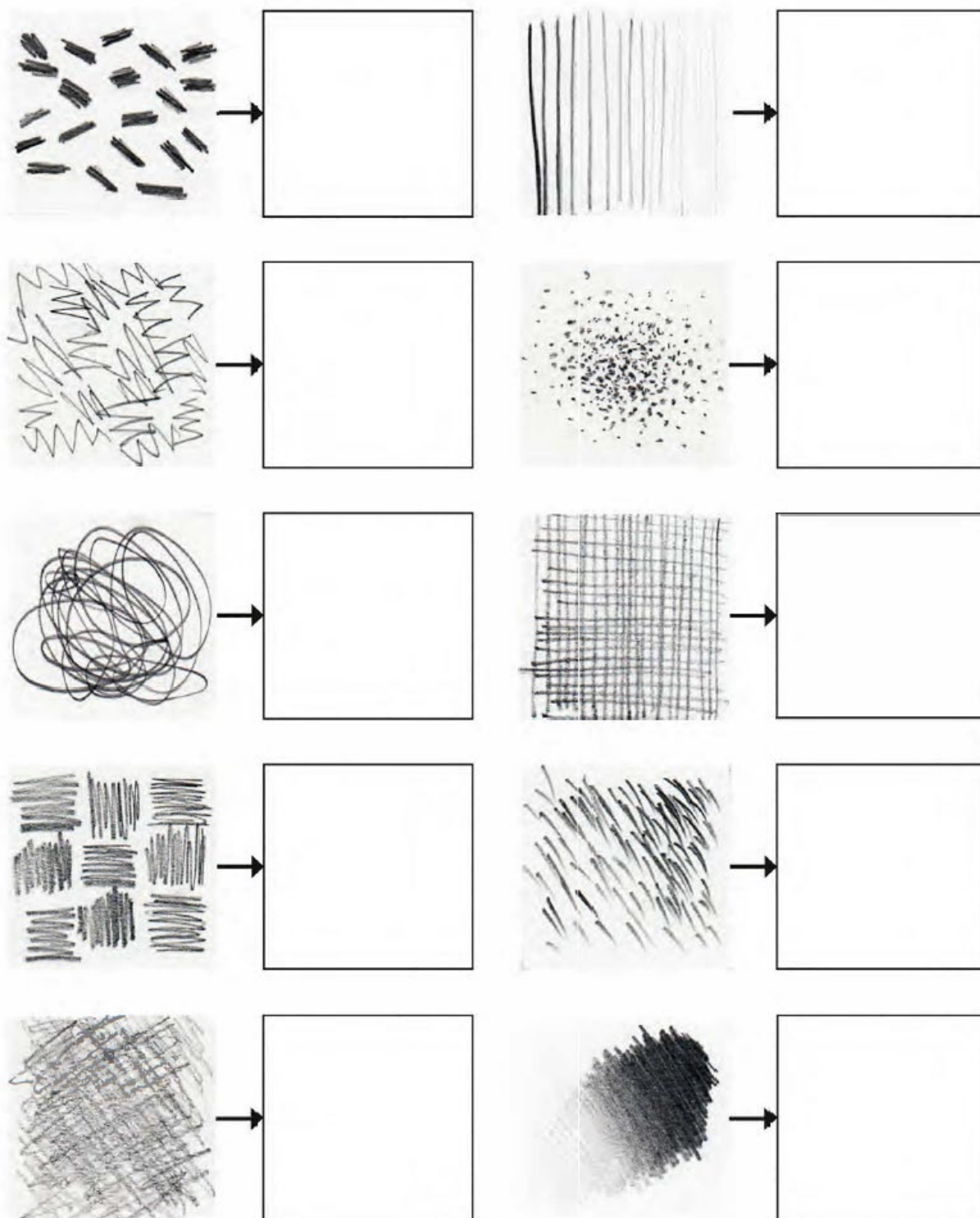


**Robin Whitmore** is a visual artist. He has worked with Magic Me's Artist Residencies in Care Homes, running a project called The Palace of Varieties.

# Mark Making

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Use the pencils provided to copy the marks below. This will help you to explore tones and textures. Think about the variation in the pressure you apply.



By Rhian Sutcliffe  
Paper Birch and Imperial Charity

# Movement & Dance – Movement Matters!

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## **Introduction**

There is a wealth of evidence available about the importance of physical activity in helping us all stay well, whether or not we have memory problems and are living with dementia. However, for people for whom word finding, or where perceiving, interpreting and communicating verbally with a focus on thinking function might be difficult, the ideas presented here are predominantly failure-free in that sense. They rely on non-verbal communications, on empathy, on sensitivity to communication through movement and dance, plus the quality of the relational experience that can emerge, bringing pleasure, fun and perhaps even a deep sense of connection and love, if I may be so bold as to suggest this. Oh, and it's important to be playful and exploratory with the idea of creating if possible a sense of 'flow' between you. The ideas below are designed to be easy to execute with a sense of connection between them. ENJOY.

## **Materials:**

- 2 x bodies (or more if you like!) – any size/height/constitution etc.
- 1 x Good quality hand-cream.
- 1 x CD player / IPod / Laptop & speaker etc.
- 1 x Favourite CD (or Spotify?): e.g. Slow Jazz/Blues, Classical, 'Rock n Roll'(once warmed up?).
- 2 x Chairs.
- 2 x Light 'free floating silk' scarves.
- 2 x Feathers – Peacock, Pheasant and/or Ostrich.

## **Warming up:**

1. Find and put on some relaxing music you know your partner likes.
2. Invite your partner to join you and sit in a chair opposite yours.
3. Ask them if they would like a massage for their hands? – if 'no', try some of the other ideas on this page. If 'yes' go on to Step 4.
4. Gently massage hands, working the cream in between fingers, on palm and backs of the hands. Particularly good if your hands are dry from using hand sanitisers! Watch out for sensitive skin and for your own or their arms/hands becoming tired. Make sure you are comfortable before starting and by all means use a table between you if that might work better. Perhaps, ask how the person feels in response to the massage as you proceed?



### **Hand Dancing:**

1. Invite partner to explore how their hands might like to move, now that they have been given a sense of connection and TLC too of course?
2. Ask them if the music makes them want to move their hands in response, stretching fingers, rotating wrists, generally exploring movement, perhaps first with one hand then adding the other.
3. You gently 'mirror' if you can the person's movements, meaning that you join in with this hand/finger/wrist moving experience (duet). You may like to hold the hand(s) or place your palm(s) on theirs and see where this takes you both? Try not to rush or hurry this as it may take time for something to feel like it's happening. It may in fact take you off the chair and into moving and/or dancing together in the space you are in. There is no right/wrong to it.
4. Change the music into something a little more up tempo that you know your partner likes (waltz perhaps?). Try using a 'floaty' silk scarf as a prop. Or a feather of some kind? Like a Peacock or Pheasant or Ostrich feather even, if you just happen to have 1 or 2 of these in a drawer or perhaps even on a hat somewhere!

**Take pleasure** in 'being with' - **Take pleasure** in the music and rhythm - **Take pleasure** in the sensations, feelings/thoughts, especially memories that may emerge during this time. Thanks for taking time to read this and if I'm really lucky you may even be inspired to try them out!

**Dr Richard Coaten**

Dancer and Dance Movement Psychotherapist: richardcoaten@hotmail.co.uk

# Multi Sensory Rainbow Days

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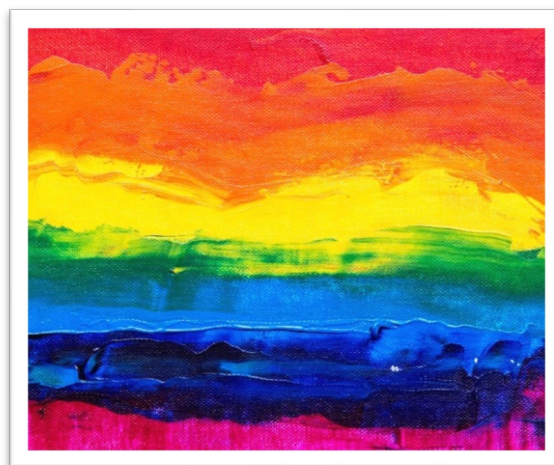
Make one colour the theme for the whole day.

Let's say it's RED.

Introduce the idea to everyone.

***Today is RED day!***

***All our activities are going to be RED.***



1. Choose something RED to wear today. Take a photo of you and anyone else wearing your RED clothes.

2. Things to talk about:

What things are usually RED?

What sort of colour is RED?

Is it a quiet or a loud colour?

Is it hot or cold?

Is it safe or dangerous?

Is it soft or hard?

Is it a friendly or scary colour?

How does it make you feel?

3. If you have paper and any art materials make a RED pattern or picture. Use as many different art materials as you can: paints, crayons, felt tips, biros, chalks, pastels, lipstick, nail varnish, coloured paper, torn scraps from magazines. Take a photo.

4. What RED things can you find around your home? Make a list of all the things you can see.

5. Gather together as many RED things in your home as you can. Arrange them all in a pile or a pattern on the floor or on a table. Take a photo.

6. What songs can you think of that have the colour RED? Can you play them?

7. What food is RED? Can you make a meal together using mainly RED ingredients? Take a photo and then eat it!



8. Take a look at all your artwork and photos at the end of the day. How was your RED day?

9. What colour will you explore next? Repeat all the same activities with that colour on another day. How many colour days can you do?

**Review:**

Save all your photos from all your colour days.

Compare how different the days have been.

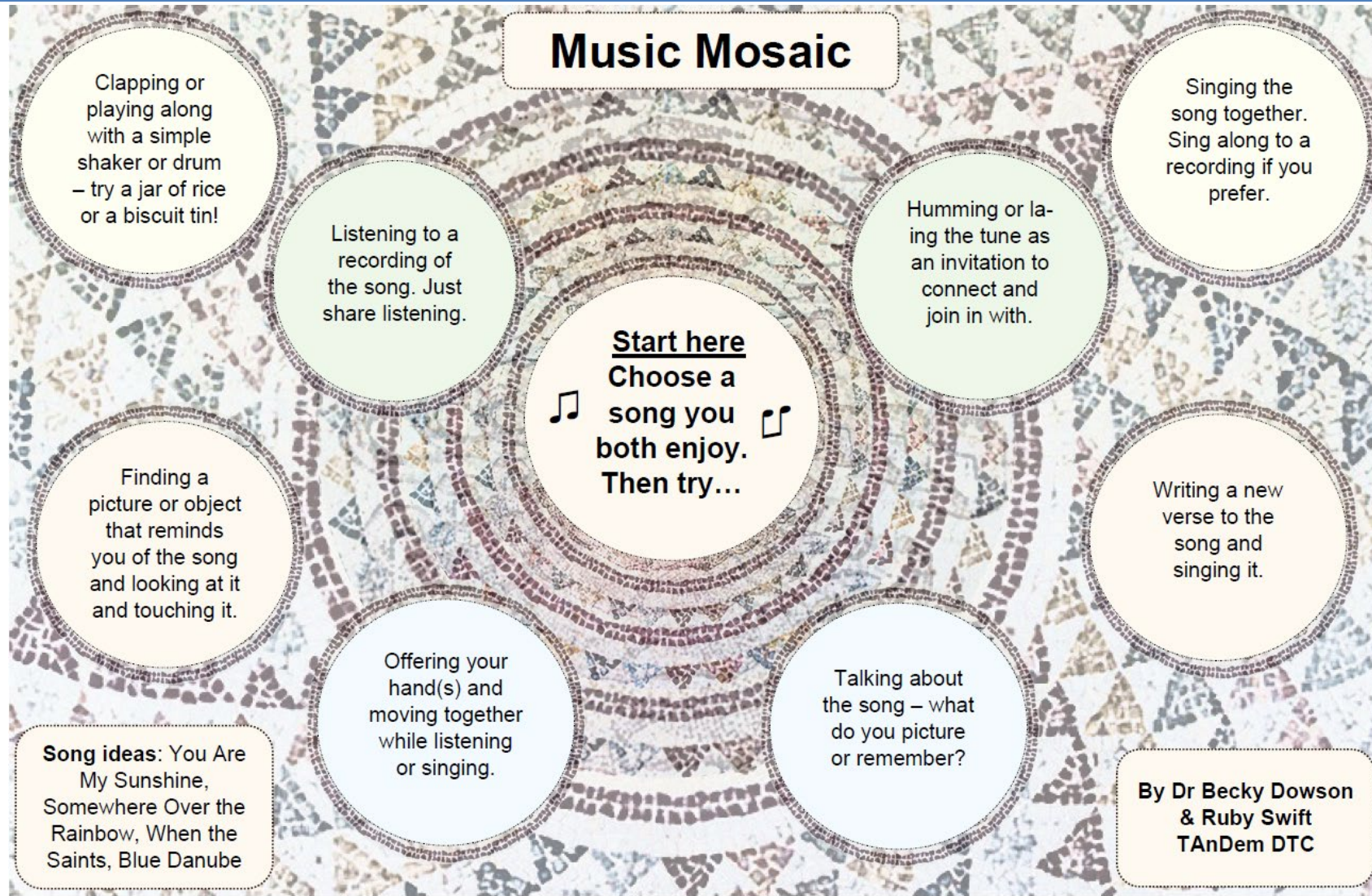
Which was your favourite colour? Why?

**Robin Whitmore**

(Instagram [robinwhitmorelondon](https://www.instagram.com/robinwhitmorelondon))

(Art Director Camberwell Incredibles, Cambridge House <https://ch1889.org/>)

# Music Mosaic



# Bread-making as a tactual meditation

for people with middle to late stage dementias

## Recipe and basic steps

### **1. Say to the person with dementia, “we’re going to make some bread, OK?”**

Try to keep his/her attention with you without chatter or brisk activity, only quiet, gently spoken or physical guidance as seems appropriate. A companionable silence is OK and calm relaxation should prevail.



### **2. Put approximately 1/4 bag of strong white bread flour and 1/4 bag of strong wholemeal bread flour in a bowl (about 750g altogether).**

This can actually be any kind of bread flour, white or brown, though the suggested mixture of approximately half and half seems to produce consistently good results. Seeds or herbs or even grated cheese or chopped olives or walnuts can also be added depending on the known tastes of the person. For initial sessions, a basic half and half loaf is probably best.

### **3. Add approximately a pinch of salt.**

### **4. Add between a half to one packet of dried yeast.**

### **5. Encourage the person with dementia to mix the dry ingredients with pleasure for as long as they want to. Simply dabbling the fingers in the flour is fine.**

From the point of view of making bread, this only takes a very short time but as a tactual therapy, this is an opportunity to experience the feeling of the texture of the flour, which is silky, slightly cool and pleasurable. Instructions, questions, conversation to engage the person should be avoided as far as possible so that the person may engage directly through their hands and experience the tactual and textural qualities without distraction. It may however be initially necessary to quietly remind the person to keep feeling/mixing the flour if they stop. It is not necessary that they pay overt attention to what their hands are doing, almost the opposite, in fact.

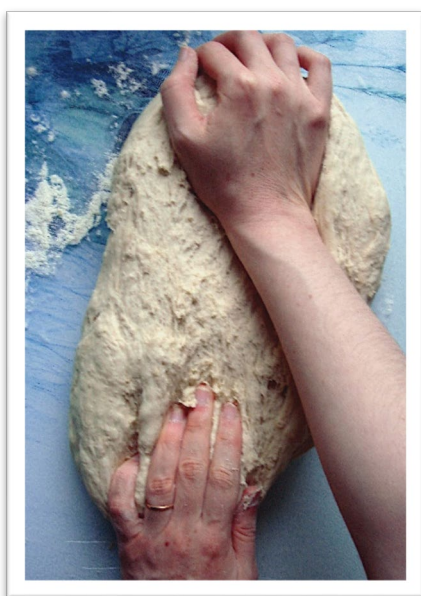
## **6. Add a small handful of soft butter or olive spread.**

This should be rubbed into the dry ingredients, ideally by the person with dementia, since it is another texture but if they don't like the feel, the carer/facilitator should do it.

## **7. Add luke-warm water (test with your hand) to the flour to make a dough. Dissolve a teaspoon or two of clear honey in the water beforehand. It helps to feed the yeast and makes tasty bread. Add the water a bit at a time.**

This mixing stage may be done entirely by the carer if preferred but it is suggested that initially, the person with dementia might be encouraged to try it. During this stage of the process however, they may not like the feel of the dough, since some people do not enjoy the stickiness, wanting to scrape it away from their fingers. Encourage them to do this. If the person really doesn't like the feel of this mixing stage, and seems to be getting agitated, the carer should quickly and quietly take over mixing until the dough is at the right consistency for kneading. The consistency of the dough at the finish should be firm but not sticky. This only takes a minute or so. It should then be handed back to the person with dementia.

The dough goes through a range of textures as the water is added. If you end up with a sticky dough, add a bit more flour. Exact quantities are not really so important, partly because bread making is very forgiving, and partly because the outcome of good bread, through it can easily be achieved, is not really the main aim of the intervention, which is to provide a structured experience of tactual communication and pleasure with minimal thinking, a mindfulness meditation facilitated by tactual activity.



## **8. Encourage the person with dementia to knead the dough.**

This can be done in any way they like for as long as they engage with the activity, which may be half an hour or more. For example, they may like stroking or patting the dough, or making it into shapes or flattening it. Gentle, quietly spoken encouragement may be necessary during this process if they falter. If they can be encouraged to use both hands simultaneously, it seems beneficial. The longer they engage with the activity, within reason, the better. It isn't really necessary to forcefully knead the dough, (usually done with the heel of the hand or knuckles) which

is the “proper” way to knead bread, unless this is the way the patient wants to approach it, since the activity is not really about making a brilliant loaf, more about experiencing the tactual qualities of the material as it changes. It is this tactual experience that promotes pleasure and contentment. Cognitive stimulation should be avoided as far as possible throughout the activity, which is best considered as a meditation.

**9. When the activity has finished and the person with dementia has had enough, allow dough to rise.**

The kneaded dough, whatever its final shape, should be placed on a buttered/oiled baking tray in a warm place for about 45 minutes or so, until it has roughly doubled in size. The person with dementia may want to look at it during this time. This is fine and may help link and reinforce the physical experience and its intrinsic reward via the smell of the baking with the subsequent eating of the (warm) bread. Strictly speaking, from a bread-making viewpoint, it should be covered with a damp tea towel or greased cling film but it’s easier for the person with dementia to see it if it’s left uncovered and seems to make little real difference to the finished bread.

**10. Bake the bread for around 40 minutes at around 200°C, Gas Mark 6 or until the loaf is golden brown and sounds hollow when tapped from underneath.**

**11. Share your loaf with calm contentment. Warm buttered is particularly nice!**



**Dr. David Prytherch**

Email: [artwheel1@virginmedia.com](mailto:artwheel1@virginmedia.com)

# Free Online Resources

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## **Leaf Creative Arts**

Includes videos of creative activities [leafcreativearts.wordpress.com](https://leafcreativearts.wordpress.com)

## **LOVE MUSIC The Lock Down Sessions!**

Arts Uplift provide links to music activities and performances  
[artsuplift.co.uk/current-projects](https://artsuplift.co.uk/current-projects)

## **Luminate @ home**

A series of creative activity films to enjoy at home [vimeo.com/luminatescotland](https://vimeo.com/luminatescotland)

## **Music for Dementia 2020**

A Musical Map to musical services and a Musical Guide for use at home  
[musicfordementia2020.com](https://musicfordementia2020.com)

## **Playlist for Life**

Playlist for Life offer guidance on sharing music at home [playlistforlife.org.uk](https://playlistforlife.org.uk)

## **Radiooooo**

Enjoy sharing and discovering the musical time machine [radiooooo.com](https://radiooooo.com)

## **Sing 4 Health and Happiness**

Video singing sessions to join in with  
[youtube.com/channel/UCH48cq8uSN83qSzSX9wWpvA](https://youtube.com/channel/UCH48cq8uSN83qSzSX9wWpvA)

## **Sound Recordings**

Material from Alan Lomax's independent archive  
[research.culturalequity.org/home-audio.jsp](https://research.culturalequity.org/home-audio.jsp)

## **The National Gallery**

Take virtual tours of art exhibitions  
[nationalgallery.org.uk/visiting/virtual-tours/google-virtual-tour](https://nationalgallery.org.uk/visiting/virtual-tours/google-virtual-tour)

## **78 RPMs and Cylinder Recordings**

Listen to recordings from the early 20th century [archive.org/details/78rpm](https://archive.org/details/78rpm)

# About Us

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The Association for Dementia Studies is an award winning, multi- professional group of practitioners, educationalists and researchers who are expert in the field of person-centred dementia care and support. With our research, education and consultancy we make a cutting-edge contribution to evidence-based, practical ways of working with people living with dementia, and their families, that enables them to live well.

Through our TAnDem research into the arts and dementia, we have grown our community of expertise and practice, forging a network of connections with artists to inform our research. Collecting their contributions to create these booklets is just one of the ways we are seeking to help people with dementia to live well through the arts.

We would like to thank all the artists who contributed to these booklets, without whom they would not have been possible.

Please get in touch if you would like to find out more.

email: [dementia@worc.ac.uk](mailto:dementia@worc.ac.uk) | Tel: +44 (0)1905 542531

[www.worcester.ac.uk/dementia](http://www.worcester.ac.uk/dementia)