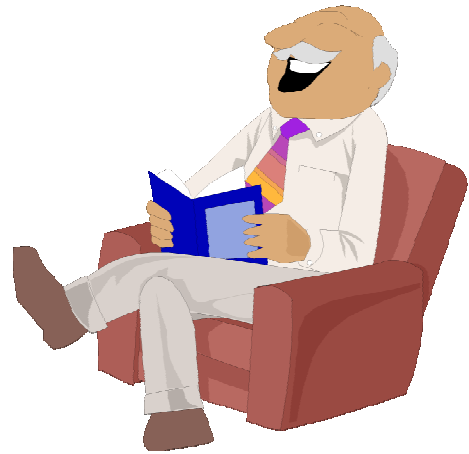


Resources for Keeping Aging Brains Active

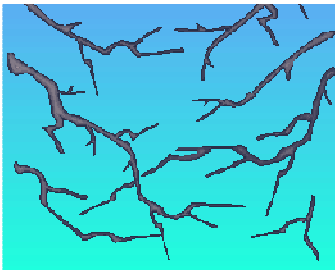
A presentation by
Kathy Laurenhue, Wiser Now, Inc.
7282 55th Ave. E, Suite 144, Bradenton, FL 34203
941-749-0220 or 800-999-0795
kathy@wisernow.com or www.wisernow.com



Introduction

The Wiser Now philosophy for brain aerobics is that exercises should trigger one or more of these three responses:

- **Ha-ha** – They're fun to do.
- **Ah-ha** – They teach you something new.
- **Aaaahh** – They make time flow and bring you satisfaction.



Making your dendrites grow

Dendrites are the branches or pathways in our brains that help us link and retrieve information. We make them grow, i.e., create new pathways, by doing or learning something new. When we simply retrieve answers from information already in our brains, we reinforce ruts.

Humor builds brain power

Fun fuels the brain.

Looking at the funny side of anything creates new connections and grows new dendrites. Here are other benefits of using our sense of humor:

- Laughter opens our mind to creative thinking.
- Laughter draws oxygen to the brain, thus bringing “fresh air” to our thinking.
- Laughter lowers our levels of cortisol, thus boosting our immune system.
- Laughter is good exercise. It stimulates our heart and lungs and temporarily improves breathing capacity.
- Laughter helps us relax, and relaxed learners learn more.
- Laughter prevents hardening of the attitudes.



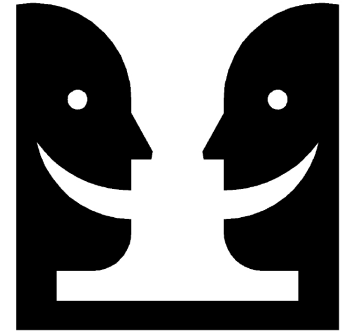
The goals

There are many worthy, mostly computer-based, programs which claim to enhance your memory or increase your brain power. That is not my goal. My goals are:

- **My version of brain aerobics first and foremost provides a prop for helping people to connect with one another.** The exercises and discussion topics give people more to talk about than the weather and offer new insights and new ways of thinking and interacting with one another.
- Knowing all the answers is not the goal. You create new pathways (grow new dendrites) in your brain when you learn new things; you create ruts (reinforce old information) when you cough up old information. **Not knowing an answer and learning something new is a good thing!**

Suggestions for effectiveness

- Slow down and enjoy the experience. **The purpose is not to get through the exercises, but to enjoy the journey.** That means approach is key. It's not about testing one another, but sharing and learning together.
- **Add motion in whatever ways you can.**
- **Going off on tangents is fine!**
- **Make it a multi-sensory experience** through adding appropriate props, videos, music, baking/eating/smelling, and anything else you can think of.
- **Involve the other person/people** in reading, demonstrations, etc.
- **Run with the ideas by creating your own variations.**



General adaptations for dementia

People who are early in the disease process need fewer adaptations of exercises than people who have moderate or severe dementia, but here are a few general suggestions, many of which are helpful in planning activities for anyone:

- **Know the individual** – Start with something of interest to the person.
- **Be patient**; slow your movements.
- **Set the person up for success** – What activity-related strengths does he still have?
- **Look for ways to adapt**: What rules can be thrown out – along with buzzers and timers?
- **Give answers as choices.**
- **Look up answers immediately after each question.**
- **Tap into rote memory.**
- **Simplify the exercises as needed.** For example, turn a matching game with 12 items into six pairs of items.
- **Allow for tangents.**
- To help preserve self-esteem even when a person knows his skill are deteriorating, **emphasize the pleasure of the activity over the intellectual challenges.**
- **Ask for opinions and advice.**
- **Make light of mistakes.**



Brain Aerobics Weekly



Word Games – 50s and 60s Jargon



Checking out the words to banish (See “Tapping into . . .”) brought to mind the slang words of my youth, many of which you may be surprised to learn are generations old. The “cool” post World War II “Beat Generation,” symbolized by writers like Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, rejected conservative mainstream American values and experimented with drugs and Eastern spirituality, but most of us were “cool” *only* in our language.

I was from the Midwest, so even my language was tame. Coming back from a visit to my California cousins, where I learned to say bitchin’ for anything good, was a habit that was quickly kyboshed by my parents. (Kybosh is apparently still a valid word from my childhood.) And just so you know, saying “Don’t have a cow,” when we felt people were getting too worked up over unimportant matters was a phrase “The Simpsons” writers stole from us.

Cast an eyeball: Can you match the 50s/60s slang word to its definition?

1. We had lots of words for things we considered cool or good. Only one of the following expresses something negative. Which is it? ____

- | | | | |
|------------|-----------|----------------|--------------|
| a. Boss | d. Funky | g. Outa sight | j. Righteous |
| b. Choice | e. Hairy | h. Primo | k. Tubular |
| c. Far out | f. Groovy | i. Radioactive | l. Wicked |

2. Of the four words that follow, which two reflect a positive event? ____ and ____

3. Which two reflect a negative event? ____ and ____

- | | |
|----------|---------|
| a. blast | c. drag |
| b. bust | d. kick |

4. When we thought someone was nuts in a good way, we called him “kookie.” When we thought he was not the brightest crayon in the box, we called him all but one of the following. Which one?

- a. BMOC
- b. doofus
- c. ditz
- d. flake
- e. out to lunch
- f. thicker than a \$5 malt (when they cost \$.30)



Brain Aerobics Weekly



Vol. 2, No. 32, August 10, 2009, ISSN 1941-2746

Read and Discuss – Smile for Candid Camera

“Candid Camera” had its television premiere August 10, 1948. Its creator, Allen Funt, got his start doing candid interviews during World War II, in part capturing soldiers’ messages to their families. Those early recordings were often poignant, but the TV show’s goal was always to make people smile.



- Allen’s son Peter, who took over the show after his father’s death in 1999, wrote that his father taught him three primary responsibilities:
- Don’t make others look bad. If you wouldn’t want to be caught in a situation depicted, chances are others would be humiliated, too.
- Don’t abuse authority. In power mismatch situations (teacher/student or boss/employee, for example), people will do almost anything, but it’s a cheap trick to put them in that position.
- Care about people. Be interested in what makes humans

tick, in what makes us smile.

Over the years, the show featured dozens of actors and celebrities, including former U.S. President Harry Truman (asking people on the street for the time), Dolly Parton, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Muhammad Ali, Woody Allen and Ray Romano. Many needed only minimal disguises because the people being filmed simply didn’t expect to see celebrities in those situations.



Here are some of the stunts actors used to “catch people in the act of being themselves”:

- Asking New Yorkers to line up alphabetically outside a movie theater
- Collecting tolls on a New Hampshire hiking trail
- Informing people picking up their pizza order that the eatery has run out of boxes

Other gags included:

- A talking mailbox
- A car which split in two as it passed a traffic policeman
- Speed bumps in a super market aisle

Talk about it

- Did you ever watch “Candid Camera” on TV? Did it make you smile?
- Do you remember any of the episodes listed above? Do you remember others you found especially funny? Talk about them.



Brain Aerobics Weekly



Tapping into your imagination

Summer is zipping by; it's time to fit in some adventure. Have you thought about summer camp? Think you're too old? Think again. There *are* many traditional camps for adults, but if communing with mosquitoes has never been your thing, here is a list of some of the world's quirkiest camps found at the website

<http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/the-worlds-quirkiest-adult-camps>:



- Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp (25 U.S. cities, plus London)
- Gladiator Training (at a Hilton Hotel in Rome – where else?)
- Elephant Mahout Training (Northern Thailand)
- Gondolier Training (Venice, of course)
- Poker Camp (Las Vegas and other gambling cities)
- Space Camp (Huntsville, AL)
- Ghost Hunter University (New Orleans)
- Crossword Puzzle Creation (combined with a Caribbean

cruise)

Your turn:

Did you go to summer camp as a child? If so, what do you remember about it? If not, is there anything you feel you missed out on?

Now imagine that as an adult you could go to any kind of camp at all – perhaps one listed above or perhaps one related to some fantasy of your own. What kind of camp would you like to go to and what would be its main attractions for you?

Where would this camp be located?

Would you like any of your family or friends to attend with you? Who?

Is there anything else that would be special about it?

If you have chosen a camp that really exists (or might exist, given our quirky world) try researching the possibilities for attending it – if not this year perhaps next year. Everyone needs a good fantasy – especially ones that might become reality.



Resources - General

Many of the books and games listed in this handout can be ordered from the Wiser Now website (www.wisernow.com) under "Resources."

For nifty mind-stimulating (and often amusing) games check out museum shops – art museums, natural history museums, science and industry museums . . .

For ease of access to new ideas each week, of course I recommend ***Brain Aerobics Weekly***, which is available at www.wisernow.com or by calling 800-999-0795.

If you sign up within 30 days of this conference, you will get an extra month free! Use code 22010.

Here are some interesting **catalogs** available in print or online:

- Bi-folkal Productions, Inc. 800-568-5357 www.bifolkal.org (reminiscence)
- Bits and Pieces, 800-544-7279, www.bitsandpieces.com
- Dover Publications, Inc., www.doverpublications.com
- ElderSong Publications, Inc., 800-397-0533, www.eldersong.com
- Mindware, 800-999-0398, www.mindwareonline.com
- Nasco Activity Therapy, 800-558-9595, www.enasco.com (ask for their Senior Activities catalog)
- S&S Primelife, 800-243-9232, www.ssw.com

Games for the Visual Mind

An asterisk indicates it's easily adaptable for someone with dementia.

- Scramble squares*
- 3-D Slide puzzles*
- Blokus*
- Color Scheme
- Connect Four*
- Gobblet*
- Izzi 2*
- Mastermind
- Square Up*
- Stare

Many people with dementia discover an ability to paint that delights and surprises them. The best book I know for encouraging art in people with dementia is *I'm Still Here* by La Doris "Sam" Heinly, which can be purchased from her directly at www.alzheimersartspeaks.com.



Games for trivia buffs

- Fact or Crap*
- Finish Lines
- Mind Trap (2 versions)
- Such and Such*
- Trivial Pursuit (multiple versions)
- Visual Brainstorms (2 versions)



Games for the creative/imaginative mind

- Apples to Apples
- Imaginiff*
- Judge for Yourself

Word Games to look for

- Mad Gab
- Quiddler*
- Scrabble
- SmartMouth
- UpWords*

Books

Trivia:

- *Do Penguins Have Knees?** and other books by David Feldman
- *The Great book of Mind Teasers and Mind Puzzlers** by George J. Summers
- *Uncle John's Bathroom Reader* series

Reminiscence activities: Check out the catalogs above, particularly Bi-folkal, Dover, ElderSong, and Nasco.

Books for stimulating opinion discussions:

- *You Be the Judge** series by Nancy Dezan, ElderSong Publications
- *If . . . (Questions for the Game of Life)** by Evelyn McFarlane and James Saywell. (There are multiple versions of their books)

On the fun of words and word games:

- *Fractured English, The Bride of Anguished English* and other book by Richard Lederer
- Books by Bill Bryson such as *The Mother Tongue* and *Made in America*
- Books by Will Shortz like *The Puzzlemaster Presents vol. 1 and 2*

Answers

Trivia Quiz

1. a. True
2. b. diluting beer
3. a. True; Czechs still drink more beer per capita than anyone in the world.
4. a. True.
5. b. False; until 1850.
6. a. True; or slurp it up
7. b. False; a labeorphilist collects beer *bottles*; a tegestologist collects beer *mats*.



50s/60s jargon

1. e. Hairy means difficult or tough
2. a. and d.
3. b. and c.
4. a. BMOC stands for "Big Man on Campus" – someone popular