



Drawing ON **Strengths**

You do NOT have to face dementia alone

5 strategies for using art with a person living with dementia

- 1. Enjoy the process-** Making art for self-expression or enjoyment is more about the process than the product. In other words, it is more important that the artist experience the satisfaction of creating, than that they meet some external standard about the appearance of the final product. This does not mean the artist will not have his/her own standards about what they creating, indeed, when making art of a personal nature it can be very important to people to accurately convey what they intended.
- 2. Make way for success-** In order to feel successful at art making, one needs a physical space that is comfortable, safe and properly equipped. Common issues to consider would be lighting, covering any delicate surfaces such as rugs or upholstery, and wearing appropriate clothing. Allowing time for instructions, art making, and then perhaps some reflection or discussion about the experience is also important.

- 3. Choose wisely-** Finding the right art materials, techniques and themes for an individual requires thought and preparation. Consider their natural strengths and abilities, their limitations or difficulties, any pertinent safety issues such as eyesight or motor problems, and their personalities and values. Involve the person you are planning for in this process by asking them questions, showing them examples, or giving them choices.

- 4. Lead by example-** There are many ways to give instructions, select one that works best for the person you are creating with. Better yet, have a couple different methods for delivering instructions ready. For example, printed instruction sheets as well as a completed sample to view. You may also want to model the process by creating your own piece alongside them so they can visually follow along.

- 5. Get the right tools for the job-** Make sure you prepare before you begin artwork by gathering the tools you need. It would be frustrating to any of us to become engrossed in a project only to find halfway through that we have run out of something or to have poor equipment hamper our progress. Art supplies vary greatly both in cost and quality. Consider the skill level of the artist, the goals of the project, and match these as best as possible to the materials you purchase.

Please visit me at www.drawingonstrengths.com for further tips and strategies for introducing art making into your life, or the life of a loved one affected by dementia. Please consider working with a trained art therapist to ensure you have both the artistic and emotional support you need.