



Australian Government

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

Food, nutrition
and dining



Creative activities resources: instructions

Colouring, conversation,
creativity and care



Introduction

Dr. Melanie Wroth, Chief Clinical Advisor,
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These colouring resources have been designed specifically for the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission by artist and aged care worker, Annette Innis, with the intention of providing a multifaceted creative experience for older Australians living in residential or home aged care settings, and for the people who care for them. But more than that, they are intended as an accompaniment to the Commission's other comprehensive [Food, Nutrition and Dining resources](#) with the aim of promoting discussions about food and the life events and celebrations that are centred around food and its preparation and consumption.

Colouring in may sound like a simple, or even childish, activity but for many adults, particularly those with memory issues, it can be an enjoyable pastime that can revive and stimulate memories and creativity and prevent boredom. It can be soothing and ease anxiety and agitation. It can promote social interaction and stimulate conversations when done in groups or with family members of all ages.

[Research](#) shows that engaging older people in creative activities like colouring in can significantly improve working memory in those with mild cognitive impairment.

Colouring in activities can:

- Improve mood
- Relieve stress
- Reduce agitation
- Promote socialisation and conversation
- Revive memories and stimulate reminiscing
- Provide an outlet for self-expression
- Help to maintain motor function
- Encourage cooperation
- Promote mindfulness (full attention, focus and concentration required)
- Provide a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction

Caregivers can benefit from colouring in too. It's a quick and inexpensive way to help you relax and engage in a fun and creative activity with the people you care for.

The sets of images in this resource depict activities or family occasions many older people will have experienced during their life. They are accompanied by stories to prompt conversation and sharing of personal stories.

I am delighted to introduce these resources to you.



Dr Melanie Wroth MBBS, FRACP
Chief Clinical Advisor

Resource user guide

This collection of themed illustrations is inspired by older Australians and their connection to food – preparing it, eating it, and using it to celebrate special occasions. It is designed to inspire and assist aged care workers to encourage the people they care for to:

- Be creative by providing them with tools to colour in or display one or more of these images you can print out.
- Talk about the memories the images evoke for them and share stories about their own childhood and life experiences.
- Participate in group activities.
- Share with visitors, even the very young who like something to do. Children love colouring in! It's great to share this activity with the elderly people in their lives.

There are many ways to enjoy these images, and there is no right or wrong way. If you are supporting a person, or a group of people as they engage with this resource, here are a few tips to help them get the most out of it.

There are six themed illustrations included in this series, and each theme contains:

1 A coloured artwork showing a complete scene

This artwork can be printed out in colour on A4, A3, or even A2 paper and then used as part of an activity session, or displayed as wall art.

Encourage participants to look at this artwork and ask them to point out what they can see in the picture. If an element of the artwork prompts personal sharing or reminiscing, ask questions, and share your own connections to the artwork and explain how it makes you feel. Are there elements that are familiar? What else could be added to this scene?



2 A black and white artwork showing a complete scene

This artwork can be printed out or photocopied to be used as a colouring in activity. A3 sized paper is strongly recommended for the best result, as there are lots of small details to see. However other sizes also work well.

For colouring in, “dry materials” such as pencils and crayons will work well to achieve a lasting result and protect artwork.

If possible, place the printed sheet of paper onto an A3 sized clipboard. This will frame the artwork and provide a smooth surface to work on, while also protecting the paper between colouring in sessions. Colouring-in can take a while, and the activity may be something to revisit over time.

It is a good idea to keep some scrap paper nearby to try out different colours or effects before adding them to the artwork.

Participants are encouraged to make the scene their own, using unique colours, patterns, and adding extra detail as they see fit. Colours don't necessarily have to resemble real life, and the colour doesn't have to fit within the lines. All creativity is welcomed!

The images can also be used for painting activities. This may influence the type of paper used so that it can support wet paint materials.

Once coloured-in, the artwork can be displayed on a pinboard or a wall using Bluetac (or a similar product), put into a frame, or in a book, to celebrate the creativity and effort of the participant. There is room for their name and date at the bottom of the page.



3 A black and white close-up of one aspect of the scene

These artworks are close-up views from the larger themed scenes. This option is ideal for those who may prefer a larger and simpler artwork to colour-in.

Participants can choose their preferred option to colour-in and work alongside others, engaging in the conversation around the theme.



4 Page to encourage additional engagement

Each artwork includes an engagement page with a story designed to enhance connection to the various themes. Invite participants to close their eyes or look at the artwork as you read the short story aloud to them. Encourage them to join in discussions prompted by the questions provided, as well as to have a go at the creative activity.

To take the resource further, try to incorporate other sensory experiences into the session (e.g., open a window/take the session outside, include some of the food featured to smell and/or taste, or role play scenarios inspired by the resource.)



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The veggie garden story

If anyone was ever looking for me, they knew they could find me in the garden. It's my happy place. Let me tell you it can be a big job looking after the garden, particularly the veggie patch, but I wouldn't have had it any other way.

Every time there was a change of season approaching, we'd be planning and scheming what we would do this time, this year, and asking ourselves which seeds to plant? Which plants to tend to, and which to harvest? I loved this part because it was always a new beginning.

I used to put on my oldest, comfiest clothing to wear while gardening, because of course you know they're going to become very grubby, very quickly. I always wore a good pair of gloves too, very thick ones.

Gardening feels so natural. It's great to get amongst the trees and plants, burying seeds, weeding the garden beds, and feeling connected to the earth.

Nothing beats picking some fresh veggies from the veggie patch, and cooking with them right away. Fresh veggies smell so good. Spinach, potatoes, tomatoes, eggplants, and many more! The herbs were impressive too, our mint plant seemed to have a mind of its own. Mint plants can grow to be gigantic!

Growing our own food in the garden was a resourceful thing to do, and we often had extra produce to hand over the fence to share with the neighbours.

**Discussion question:**
What was your favourite thing to grow in the garden?

**Activity (on the next page):**
It's almost Spring and some fresh seeds have been sown. Fill out the labels so you can remember which plant is which!




Download the resources here:
agedcarequality.gov.au/resources/creative-activities-and-colouring-resources


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The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.



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