

# HACK

## CARE



TIPS AND TRICKS FOR A DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY HOME.







# FOREWORD

BY LIEN FOUNDATION

**C**all it an inevitable consequence of a fast-ageing world, but every three seconds someone in the world develops dementia. Fifty million people—the vast majority in their 60s or older — live with this degenerative disorder of the brain, which can affect memory, reason, and personality, and rob one’s sense of self.

Rapidly-ageing Singapore is no different. With the condition exacting a heavy caregiving toll, persons with dementia make up a growing proportion of residents in nursing homes

worldwide. But they can and should be enabled to age amidst the warmth and familiarity of their own homes for as long as possible. Institutional care need not be the de facto option.

However, our everyday home environments do not always anticipate the unique needs of people battling cognitive and physical frailty. For the most part, we remain unaware of the physiological obstacles encountered daily, and how some simple and creative interventions at home can mitigate their struggles. This is where design can play an outsized role in

shaping environments that empower persons with dementia as well as their caregivers. Innovations in design can smooth friction caused by disease and debilitation, and help users find happiness in everyday experiences at home. Many academic papers on dementia-friendly environments offer guidelines or principles for caregivers and seniors themselves. But a gap remains between principle and practice.

It was with an aim to bridge this gap that the Lien Foundation commissioned Lekker Architects and Lanzavecchia+Wai, an industrial design studio, to weave creativity with practical design experience and improve the homes and lives of persons affected by dementia.

HACK CARE chronicles the fruits of this collaboration, showcasing “design hacks” — or smart adjustments — to everyday IKEA furniture and products to create a dementia-friendly home. The ideas are presented in the form of an IKEA catalogue, with its customary catchy language and bold graphics. While this is an independent initiative, we chose IKEA products for their accessibility and ease of use. With more than 400 stores worldwide, the Swedish furniture giant’s affordable, easy-to-assemble products have made their way into homes across cultures, countries and continents. It has also teamed up with Swedish construction firm Skanska and Queen Silvia of Sweden to create “SilviaBo”, a range of low-cost, dementia-and-disability-friendly, modular housing for people in their mid-fifties or older. It is in this spirit that we offer this book.

In the urban language of millennials, to “hack” something is to improvise and adapt it. The solution may be rough and imperfect, but it’s often smart and effective. This attitude to problem-solving parallels the versatility of IKEA products that lend themselves easily to improvisation. As a creative “on-the-ground” response, the hack is truly democratic — it is open

to anyone who wants to improve the status quo. We hope the ideas in the pages that follow can inspire caregivers to also come up with their own hacks uniquely suited to the tastes and preferences of their loved ones.

Living with dementia is daunting, but challenges can be overcome with imagination, compassion and lessons learnt from the shared experiences of those who have been on a similar journey before. We end this catalogue with insights from individuals who have an intimate understanding of dementia at the professional and personal levels. We hope that these real-life stories will let caregivers know that they are not alone in this journey and that they can always count on the collective wisdom of others.

The Foundation would like to thank the team of architects and designers who worked tirelessly on this project. They brought empathy into their design process, trying to understand the everyday needs of the person with dementia and their caregivers. The design ideas illustrated within were refined many times over, as the team deliberated over how each design idea would improve their quality of life.

As we were finalising this labour of love, the world was caught unawares by a pandemic which is reaping a grim harvest of human lives, particularly among the elderly. For persons with dementia, COVID-19 has dealt a cruel double whammy. Families have been hard-pressed to explain to their loved ones why they must be cooped up at home all the time. Disruption can be especially disorienting for seniors with cognitive frailty. We hope the practical ideas in this book can help make life at home more comfortable, even enjoyable, during this difficult time.

Stay safe and be inspired!



# HACK CARE

## TIPS AND TRICKS FOR A DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY HOME

Welcome! This catalogue presents more than 240 pages of ideas to make your home a friendlier environment for your elderly loved ones. We've assembled practical hacks, wacky ideas, and simple tips and tricks to simplify your life as you cope with the daily challenges of caregiving.

We also share diverse stories that uncover the human experience and emotions behind the caregiving journey — so that you will never feel alone. We hope that this "catalogue of ideas" will inspire you to come up with your own brilliant hacks, suited to your own needs.

Go ahead. Hack care.

## REFLECTIONS

Our essays reflect on how our loved ones perceive everyday furniture, sensations, and rituals. We suggest ways to enhance them into meaningful experiences that improve their well-being.

- 12** The Chair
- 56** Keeping in Touch
- 82** Conviviality and Meals
- 190** The "Dusk Crisis"



# MICRO-WORLDS



p. 54

### FIDGET PLAY

No gadgets here, but many ideas for fidgety fingers.

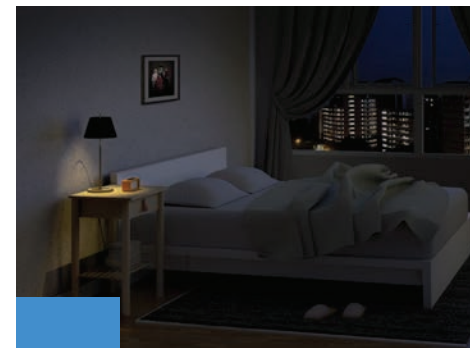
# DAILY RITUALS



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### MEALTIME

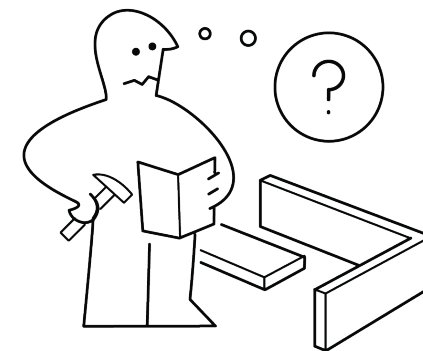
Make it all delicious and fuss-free.



p. 188

### TIME & LIGHT

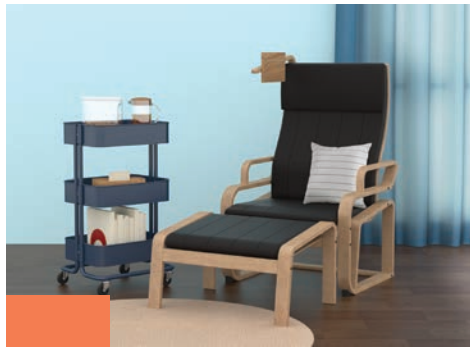
From sunrise to sunset, the light is our friend.



## INSTRUCTION MANUALS

**POÄNG** Assembly Instructions  
**ALGOT** Assembly Instructions  
**LIVING TABLE** Assembly Instructions  
**FIDGET BOARD** Assembly Instructions

[www.hackcare.sg](http://www.hackcare.sg)



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### THE CHAIR

We bring care to the chair, because chairing is caring.



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### THE LIVING TABLE

Rest your elbows while we table great ideas for you to ponder.



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### CARE & CLEANING

Cleaning tips to make things spick and span.



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## VOICES

- 212** Ruth Wong, ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE ASSOCIATION
- 220** Dr Wong Chek Hooi, KHOO TECK PHUAT HOSPITAL
- 226** Eric Lim, BRAHM CENTRE
- 234** Ong Ker-Shing, LEKKER ARCHITECTS



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### VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

Clean the view and hide the mess. We make life simple.



p. 34

### THE ALGOT UNIVERSE

Discover a parallel universe conceived around an armchair.



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### NEW ROOM

Adapt furniture arrangements to suit living needs.

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# THIS IS A MANIFESTO

GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO EMPOWER PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

**01 Let persons with dementia play an active role.**

As much as possible, help them do as many things by themselves as they can. Doing so maintains an active state of mind and forestalls cognitive decline.

**02 Encourage decision-making.**

Even as life becomes challenging, present simple choices and let them continue making decisions. This helps to stimulate their minds and also gives them control.

**03 Affirm their sense of self.**

Respect them as persons and honour their desires and preferences.

**04 Have simple conveniences within easy reach.**

When they can fulfil simple needs by themselves, their sense of agency is reinforced. Balance between being enabling and protective.

**05 Familiarity is comforting.**

Avoid drastic changes. Include habitual rituals and objects that reassure. These help to conjure familiar associations and memories.

**06 Don't forget the simple pleasures.**

Delightful sensations – however fleeting – improve the spirit and well-being.

**07 Simplify the environment.**

Clutter, noise, and other visual stimuli can be disorienting. Remove these environmental triggers for calmness and serenity.

**08 Do things together.**

Encourage family members to interact meaningfully with the person with dementia. Include them in day-to-day family activities, but let them engage on their own terms.

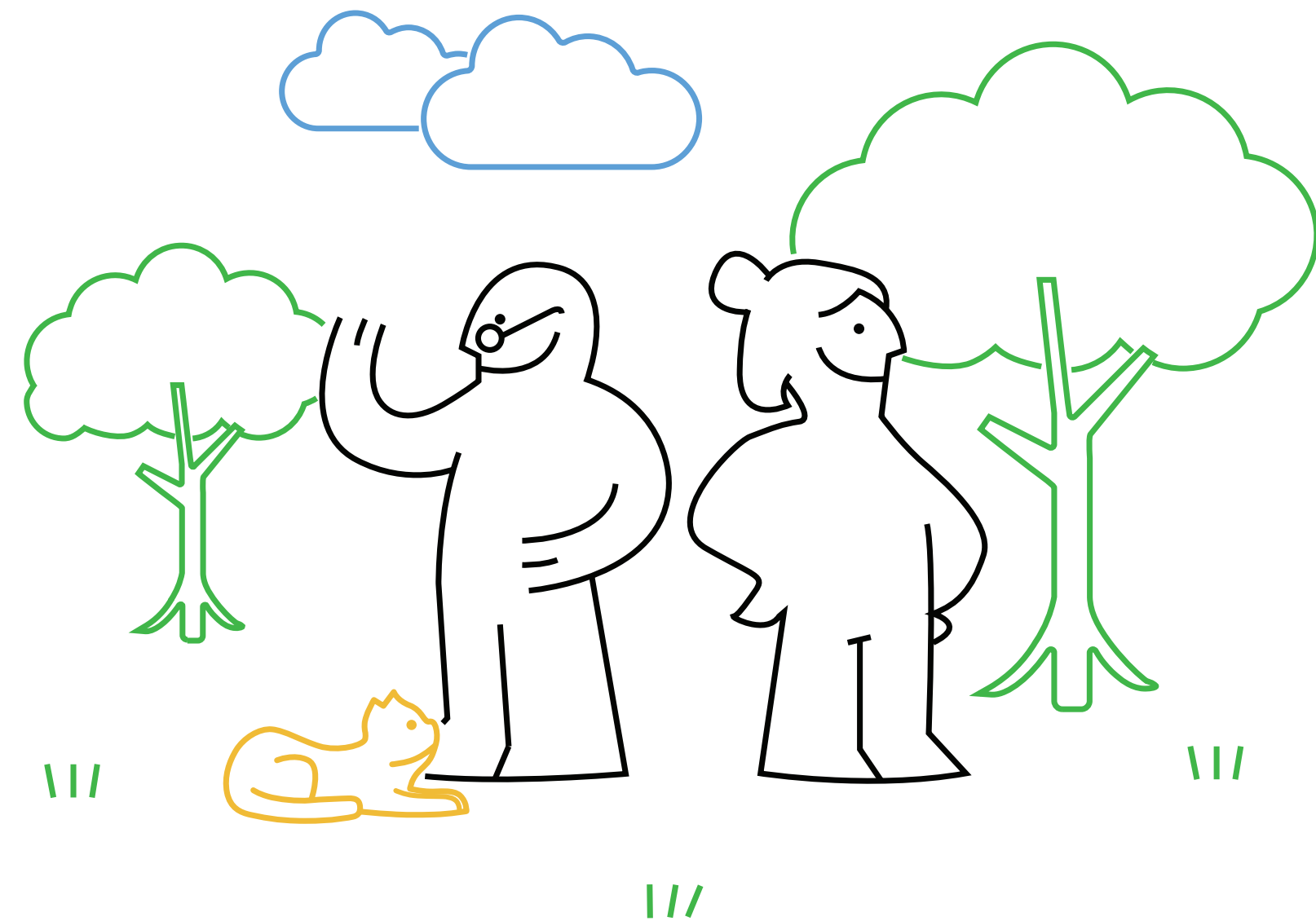
**09 Stay flexible and adaptable.**

Caring requires the versatility to manage unexpected situations. It helps to be organized and prepared. Be willing to ask for help.

**10 The caregiver matters.**

Simplify things for the caregiver as much as possible and make time for regular breaks. Self-care allows the caregiver to care better for his or her loved one.





## MEET ALBERT & LUCY

Our forgetful friends who lead very colourful lives and enjoy fun activities. Simple, delightful sensations give them immense joy. At their age, Albert and Lucy still do many things themselves although they occasionally need some help. Sometimes they forget very simple things – but none of it ever matters.

Look out for them as you journey through this book.

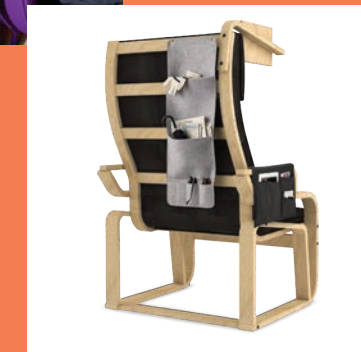




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# THE CHAIR

Classic and sturdy, our POÄNG chair adopts simple tweaks that enhance mobility. Modified handles and supports make it easier for elderly users to sit down and stand up independently in this hacked version of a classic armchair.





# The Chair

A PLACE FOR CARE AND COMFORT

For many people with dementia (and their carers), there is that chair. Day after day, it is the centre of interactions, of life's rituals. This can happen in early stages, or after more substantial decline. It is more common with men—but is often the case for women, too. One chair, often a longstanding favourite, becomes a new kind of security object: the space in which our friend or relative decides to spend most of his or her day.

The chair becomes an essential thing for many—one which distils a number of issues faced by those living with this condition. It can clearly be an oasis, or an anchor; something which gives a sense of comfort and familiarity. It is also a

bittersweet thing: as a person's life-world contracts, he or she comes to rely on the chair more and more as a protagonist in the day. It becomes a spatial epicentre, used to mark out segments in space and time.

“My Dad does occasionally sit somewhere else,” says Shing. “But it is rare enough now that we take notice when he does. For the most part, the chair seems to represent a reliance on fixed reference points—he seems relieved to see that the chair is there, each time, when he enters the room.”

The chair also may serve as one stop within a walking circuit—typically between bedrooms, hallway, and kitchen. This can be a very short route in a landed house, and much



more so in a flat. The location of the chair along a pacing route can lead to quite frequent resting moments, as well as resting for short periods before getting up again to walk another lap or two. In the evenings, and especially at dusk, this can become a restless cycle of activity.

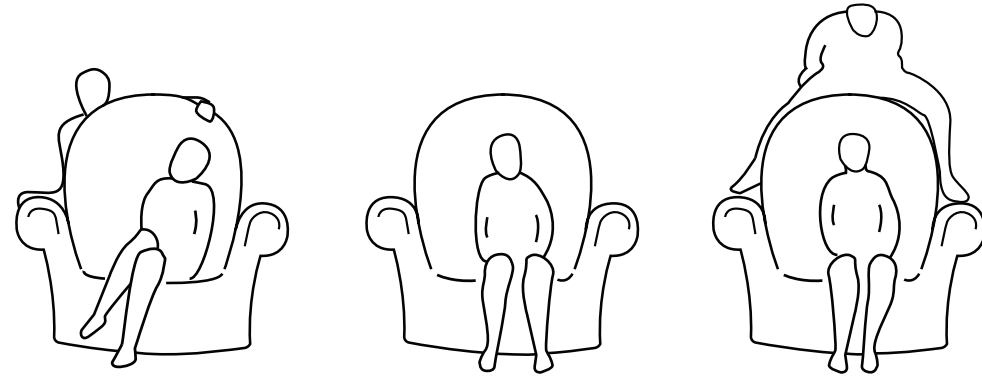
For some, the chair likewise provides a place to take a few short naps during the day. Shing says, “My dad will adjust his sitting position, make himself a bit more horizontal, and lift his feet up on the coffee table to sleep for a bit.” Napping is a good practice for individuals of all ages, both sick and healthy, and the chair can allow for a choice of resting times, or simply an amenity for a spontaneous snooze.

Put together, however, these activities mean that the care recipient may spend significantly more time sitting than the average person would in a single day. Many living with dementia experience a higher frequency of muscle and skin ache, and even sores (similar to bed sores) as a result.

And the chair may serve yet more functions. It often serves as a social centre: a frame for interactions, in which family members spend time and make contact. To establish a satisfying sense of intimacy, this sometimes involves perching (somewhat unstably) on the arms of the chair or sitting on another piece of furniture immediately nearby. This is where we might place ourselves for a quick check-in, a hello or a brief chat.







***“It can clearly be an oasis, or an anchor; something which gives a sense of comfort and familiarity.”***

At the same time, visits from extended family or friends can pose a challenge—when multiple people may gather around the chair, these “busy” interactions might cause some discomfort for persons with dementia in focusing visual and auditory attention. The position of the chair can sometimes place one at the mercy of whatever is happening around, creating moments of stress.

Due to its many roles and functions, the design of the chair is clearly important—as is its durability.

“My mother has become frustrated with the arms of the chair,” says Shing. “She notices that they are too narrow. She would prefer them to be wide, so that my father could have objects around him for comfort. It would be convenient

to have something like the American La-Z-Boy recliners, which had very wide arms and drink-holders, like a business-class airplane seat.”

Shing’s father’s previous chair had to be replaced, due to the upholstery of the arms repeatedly wearing out. It was a “simple upholstered armchair,” and her father would worry the ends of the arms with his fingers, causing them to become threadbare very quickly. His new chair has smooth, resistant leather arms—but he can no longer relieve anxiety through rubbing them. The arms of many such lounge chairs are made of smooth or slippery materials, which may cause a fall when older adults use them for leverage in standing up and sitting.

Most directly, the chair takes a lot of wear and



tear through long hours of sitting, as well as in cases of incontinence. This is why many carers may prefer a leather seat. Typically, care recipients beyond a certain point of decline will wear a diaper, but there remains the potential for accidents which affect the chair fabric. The bottoms of the legs are also subject to a lot of dragging, as the user may not take care when dragging the chair into a desired position.

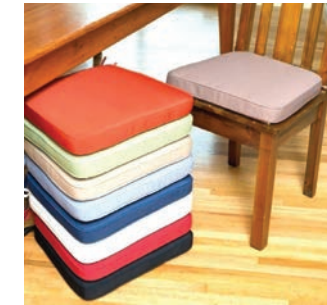
A last consideration is not the chair itself, but its location. As a person with dementia can spend long hours in the chair, the surrounding microclimate is important. Excessive heat, or direct exposure to air conditioning supply may cause thermal discomfort—as well as an increased chance of illness. Ideally, the position of the chair should benefit from a mild temperature, and comfortable amount of air movement. At the same time, we should find a space where daylighting is not glaring, or in which carers and others would not be between the chair and window, causing silhouetting and difficulty in recognition.

## CHAIR TIPS

### Selecting and placing the chair



1. Consider durability, balance, coolness and comfort of materials.



2. Include items for adjustment of body position.



3. Similar height, side-by-side seating for visitors allows for intimate interaction without causing discomfort.



4. Avoid placing the chair in direct sunlight or facing the air conditioners.



# FROM EASY...



Our POÄNG chair adapts IKEA's classic armchair to a sturdier all-purpose one. A more upright posture and sturdier armrests facilitate stand-to-sit transitions while our new headrest makes that power nap a "head-tilt" away.

# ...TO STURDY

HACKED POÄNG  
armchair

\$208



HACK

- 01 POÄNG Chair Improved support
- 02 FROSTA legs with APTITLIG Napping surface
- 03 FROSTA legs Sturdier armrest
- 04 POÄNG Ottoman legs Raised height for easy standing





## Anchor of comfort and familiarity

For many, the chair offers a reassuring sanctuary. From this perch, one may stare into space to reminisce a different world, letting time pass in lazy fashion. The chair also provides an anchor to which one returns — a fixed spatial temporal place in the home — that provides comfort and familiarity.



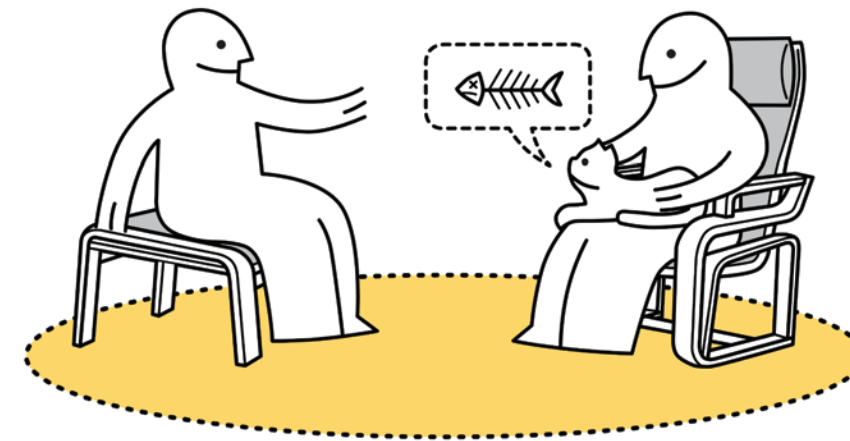


# Living Chair

Make the lived experience from the chair positive and life-affirming. The immediate presence of loved ones offers interaction and intimacy, enhancing this feeling of warmth and familiarity.



Interaction is always welcome, but ensure that it does not overwhelm the care recipient. Arrange the chairs in a way that creates companionable intimacy, but avoid direct-facing arrangements that could be intimidating.



Create the space for care recipients to interact on their own terms. Observe personal space and avoid overwhelming them with too much stimuli.

## REKINDLE FAMILIAR SENSATIONS

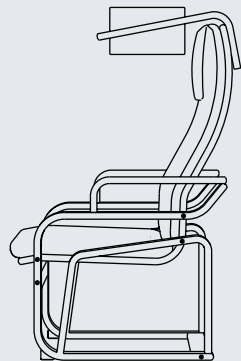


Whether it be their favourite music or the grip of a favourite object, familiar sensations offer comfort and reassurance. Not only do they create a sense of security, they also help to conjure positive memories, however slight and fleeting.



# Super POÄNG

Our adapted POÄNG comes with supercharged features for happy living. Its sturdy construction with grip handles make it easy for one to sit or stand independently. With our new headrest, that power nap is just a tilt of the head away.



**HACKED POÄNG**  
Sturdy armchair

For assembly instructions, see  
[www.hackcare.sg](http://www.hackcare.sg)

- 01 POÄNG Chair**
- 02 APTILIG & FROSTA** Napping surface
- 03 FROSTA** Sturdy armrest
- 04 POÄNG Ottoman** Improved back support
- 05 POÄNG Ottoman** For visitors to sit or for Albert to stretch out
- 06 RÅSKOG**



**HACKED POÄNG**  
armchair and footstool  
**\$299**

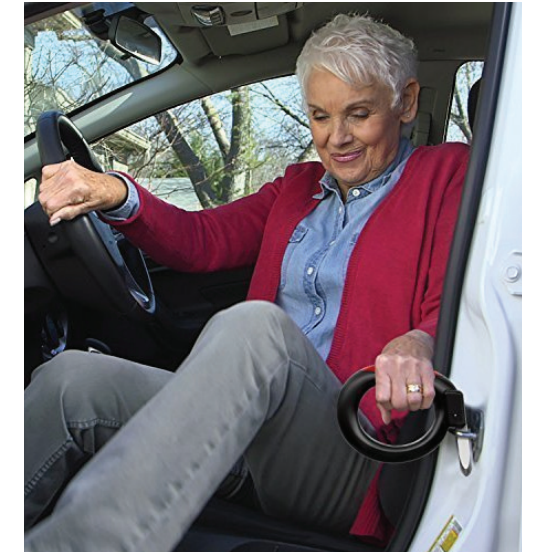


# INDEPENDENT BODY, HEALTHY MIND

What we do with our bodies — that ability to independently sit or stand, maintain one's posture, seek comfort — affect our well-being and sense of autonomy. Simple furniture adaptations help to preserve this independence.



The stand-to-sit transition and vice versa is a real obstacle for many seniors. Minor adjustments — like a grab support or a more upright sitting height — help to mitigate this transition. That way, users can sit or stand by themselves without too much assistance.



Repurpose mobility aids like grab handles to accompany your chairs at home. These add-ons encourage independence around the house.





### 01 Back support

Car seat supports are a good add-on to improve posture. Additional padded cushions help to raise the seat height when needed.

**Seat and armrest covers:** Available at home supply stores and petrol stations.



### 02 Padded armrests

Seat belt covers are useful for padding armrests to provide a more comfortable elbow experience.



### 03 Feet spa

That warm relaxing sensation of soaking one's feet in warm water. Heaven.



## Sense and sense-ability

It is a truth universally acknowledged that pleasurable sensations make a life worth living. Indulge in as many of these as needed to make yourself feel good.



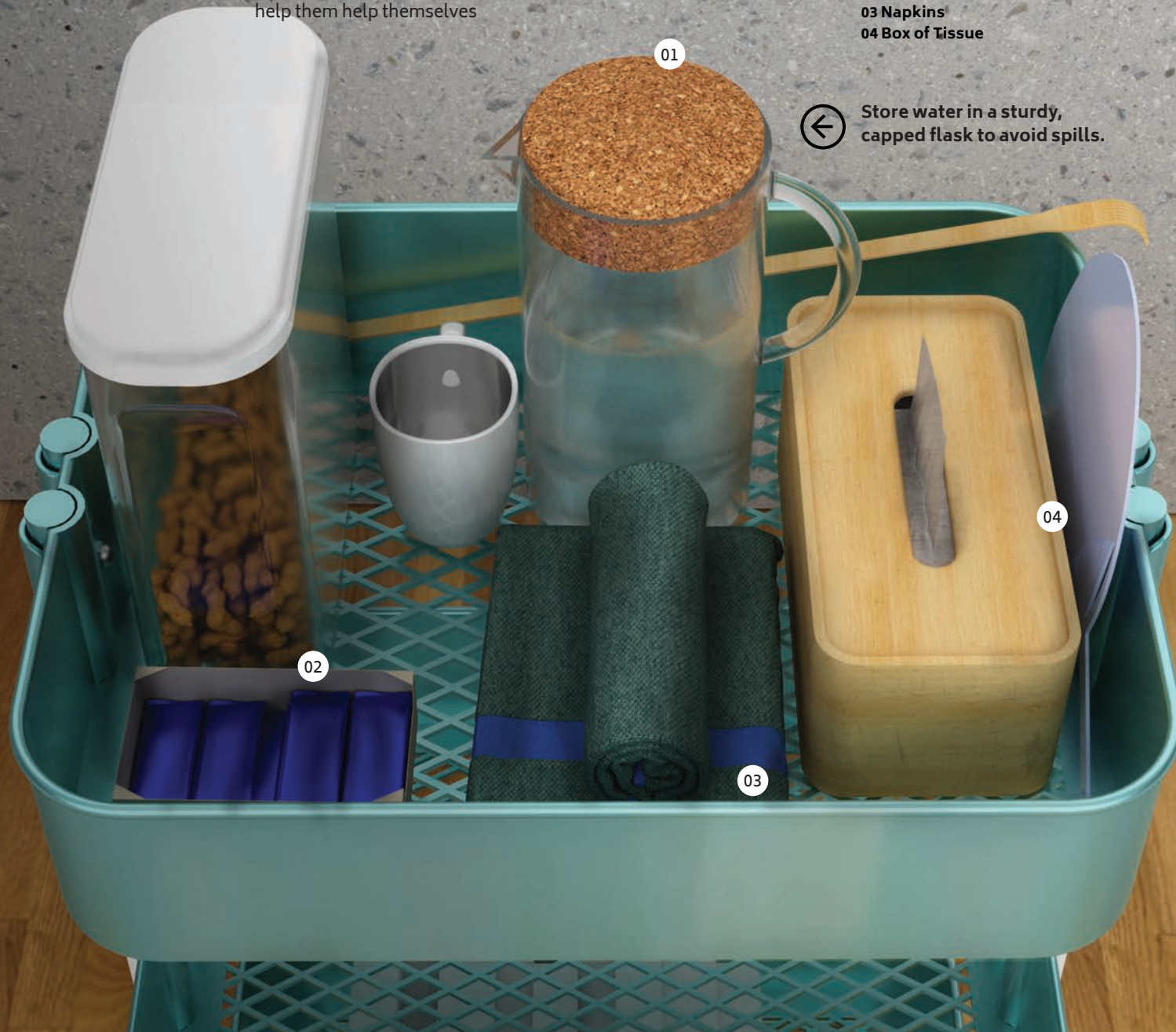
## RÅSKOG Essential Kit

help them help themselves

- 01 Water Pitcher
- 02 Snacks Like biscuits or chocolates
- 03 Napkins
- 04 Box of Tissue

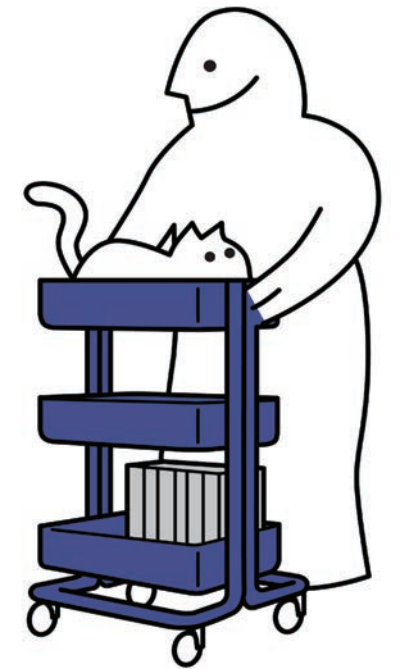


Store water in a sturdy, capped flask to avoid spills.



## My chair-side companions

Chair-side conveniences like a water pitcher and simple nibbles allow users to satisfy cravings at peckish moments. Gather these items into a mobile RÅSKOG that wheels to the POÄNG chair — like a trusty chair-side friend.



A cat in a RÅSKOG? Why not?  
Pets are therapeutic creatures.

The RÅSKOG provides easy organizing and storage solutions for essentials like tissue paper and drinks.



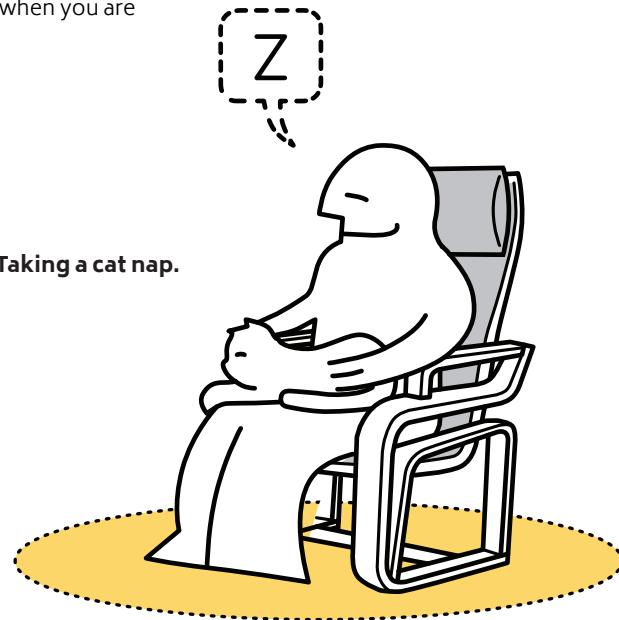
# The power nap

Daytime naps are major enhancers to the day. They increase alertness, improve perception, brighten mood and boost memory. With our new headrest, that quick power nap is just a head-tilt away.



Nap in peace. Our new headrest allows you to tilt your head into restful slumber. No more sudden jerks just when you are about to doze off.

Taking a cat nap.

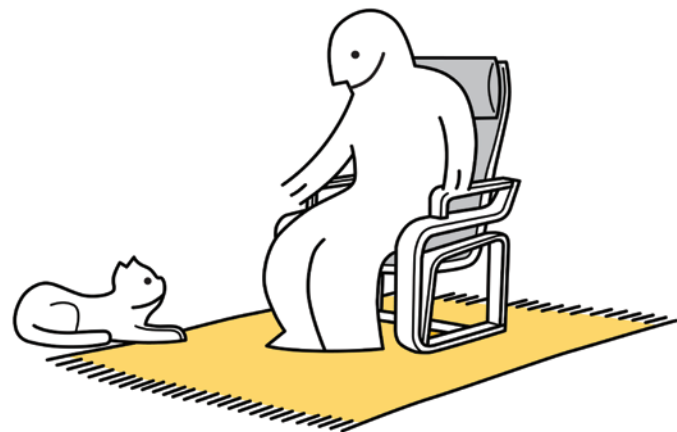


For napping comfort, ensure that the chair is placed away from the air-conditioner or direct sunlight. If the indoor environment gets a little chilly, a cosy blanket does the trick.



## Other chair-side friends

Living creatures respond to love and attention. Simple acts of physical affection like cajoling, stroking and caressing are therapeutic forms of engagement. Pets can make excellent chair-side living companions.



Fish tanks are delightful, fuss-free and leave no mess.



How about an affectionate and loveable puppy (robot)?



Cats. Meow. They need no words.

## STORE MORE.

KNALLBÄGGE  
hanging organiser

\$10.50

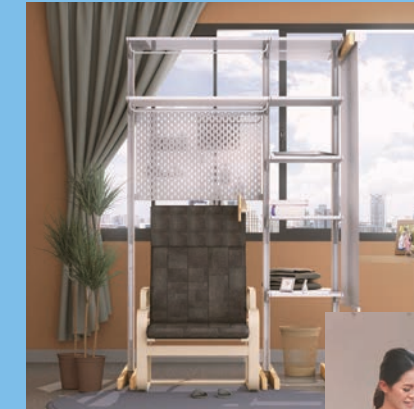


← Umbrella, newspaper,  
any other things you need  
— stuff them away in the  
seat pocket behind.

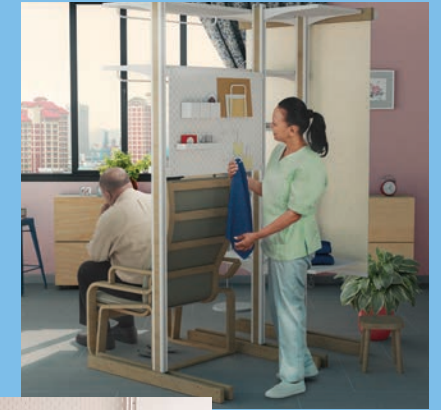
STICKAT  
bed pocket  
\$9.90

Ladies and gentlemen, our seat has been raised to the upright position, with no tray tables to stow away. Our POÄNG will land shortly.





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p.42

# THE ALGOT UNIVERSE

Make life easier for the carer and the cared by organising community and convenience around the chair. The ALGOT brings life to the shelf in a way that offers the privacy of an alcove with a human and personal touch.



# THE ONLY COMPANION YOU'LL EVER NEED

EVEN  
LOWER  
SIZE

ALGOT MINI  
flexible care space

**\$159**



Get back to basics with the ALGOT Mini, our most economical configuration.  
See assembly instructions at [www.hackcare.sg](http://www.hackcare.sg)

## Cosy Corner

At once cosy and functional, we can use the ALGOT to create a personalised alcove for Albert.

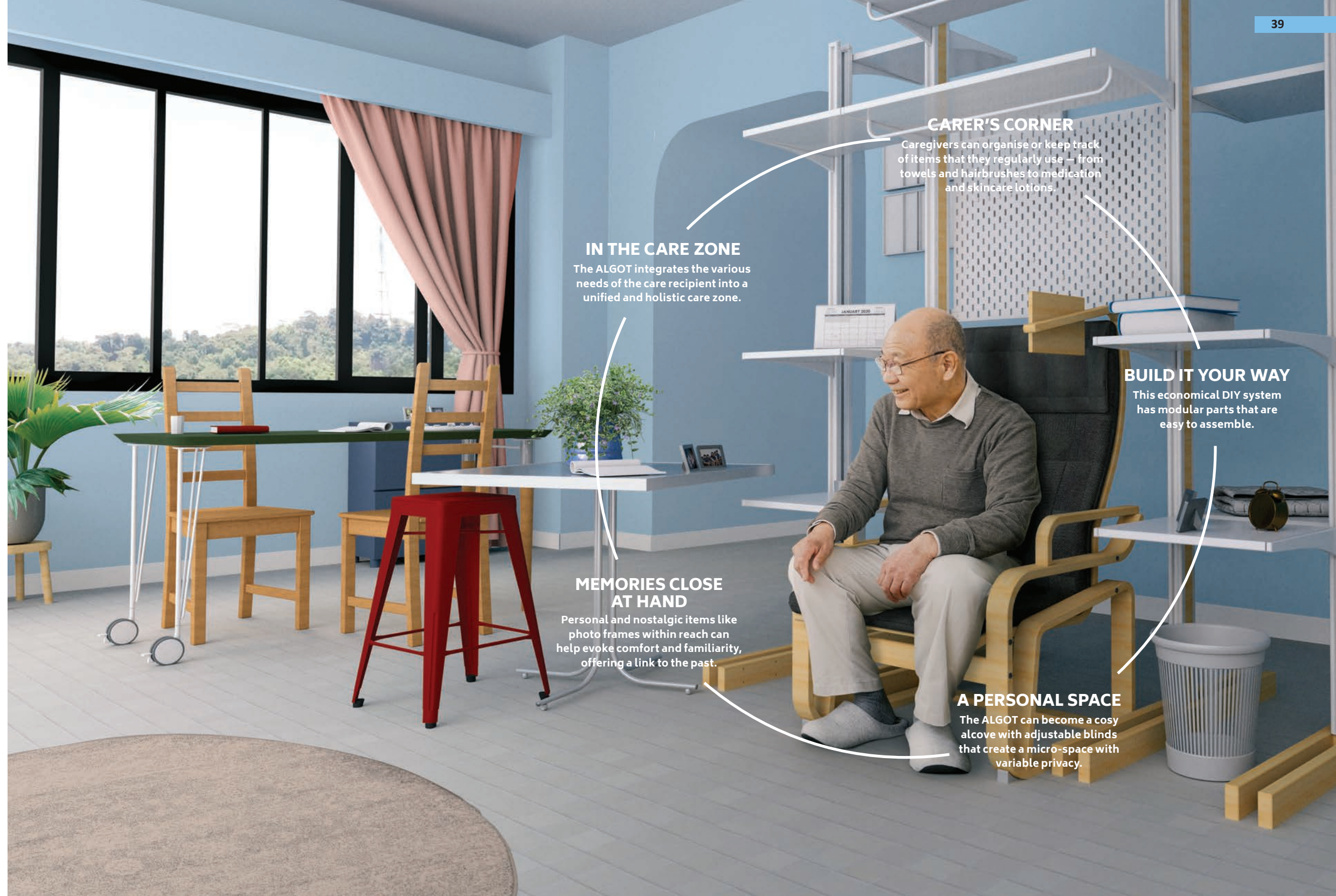


A cat, a rug, a plant — having these personalised items close by helps to humanise Albert's immediate environment. The ALGOT organises Albert's personal effects and other items needed for his care into an easily accessible and visually legible arrangement.



# At the centre of life

The care recipient is the focus of attention and his or her well-being is paramount. We should ensure that items they need are within immediate reach so that they can help themselves accordingly. The ALGOT is a scaffold that accommodates multifarious needs — including a corner for the carer to organise caregiving items.



## CARER'S CORNER

Caregivers can organise or keep track of items that they regularly use — from towels and hairbrushes to medication and skincare lotions.

## IN THE CARE ZONE

The ALGOT integrates the various needs of the care recipient into a unified and holistic care zone.

## MEMORIES CLOSE AT HAND

Personal and nostalgic items like photo frames within reach can help evoke comfort and familiarity, offering a link to the past.

## BUILD IT YOUR WAY

This economical DIY system has modular parts that are easy to assemble.

## A PERSONAL SPACE

The ALGOT can become a cosy alcove with adjustable blinds that create a micro-space with variable privacy.



## BEFORE



## AFTER



ALGOT  
shelving system

**\$275**

**HACK**

The ALGOT complements our hacked POÄNG, bundling all elements of care into a compact, customisable system.

**Welcome to the ALGOT universe.**



# Community around the chair

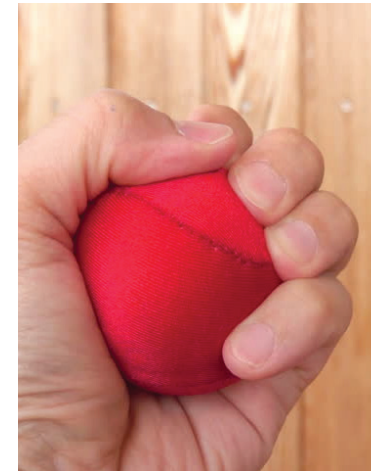
Interaction and intimacy make a huge difference. The immediate presence of friends and family offer human warmth to the care recipient's lived experience.



Family members can let their everyday interaction and bonding activities take place around the care recipient. This brings life to the space immediately around the ALGOT.



Add a dash of green! Potted plants are therapeutic and provide a sense of well-being.







ALGOT  
shelving system

\$ 275

01

02

03

04

05

IVAR Uprights  
customised dimentions

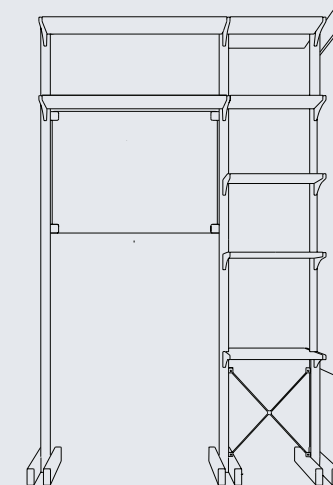
\$ 15



Position the TUPPLUR blind on  
the ALGOT for maximum effect.  
A well-placed blind allows for  
views while offering privacy and  
protection from direct sunlight.

## A system to meet your needs

Every activity benefits from a system, even the act of giving care. The ALGOT offers a modular solution to organise life and care-giving around a chair.



### ALGOT Midi

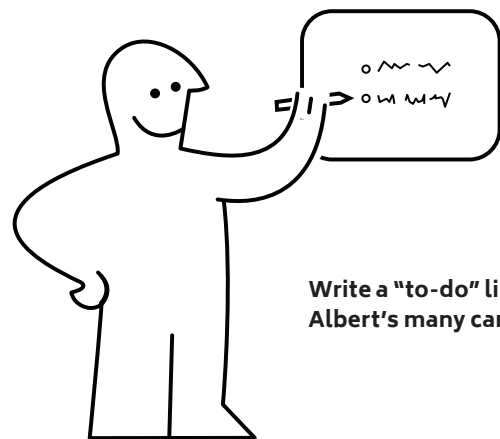
Freestanding system to  
complement the POÄNG chair.

- 01 ALGOT shelf From IKEA
- 02 TUPPLUR blind From IKEA
- 03 SKÅDIS pegboard From IKEA
- 04 Hacked POÄNG See chapter 1
- 05 IVAR shelf upright From IKEA. To be trimmed to length and drilled out.

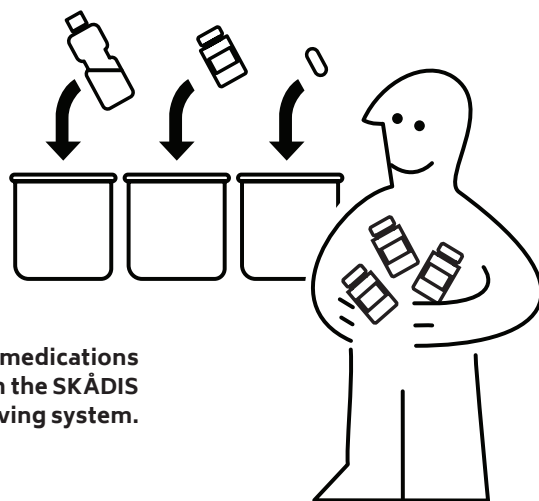


# Carer's corner

Sort and organise important care needs like towels, hand lotions, and medication with our simple, easy-to-use Carer's Corner behind the chair. This interface for sorting documents and items makes life easier for the caregiver.



Write a "to-do" list to track Albert's many care needs.



Sort Lucy's medications with the SKÅDIS shelving system.

VALUE OF ATTENTIVE CARE  
**PRICELESS**



The Carer's Corner is an easy-to-use interface for the caregiver to organise the care recipient's many needs and items while staying close by.



## At your convenience

When the ALGOT and SKÅDIS come together, the result is a system that manages visual clutter, organising the many items that the carer needs to keep track of.

SKÅDIS  
pegboard and accessories

01 **\$80**

- 01 SKÅDIS pegboard
- 02 SKÅDIS hook
- 03 SKÅDIS shelf
- 04 SKÅDIS container
- 05 SKÅDIS letter holder
- 06 SKÅDIS clips

## Seeing is remembering



Track Albert's mealtimes, medication and doctor's visits with post-its or written reminders. Alarm clocks also serve as externalised reminders for meal and medication times. These methods ease the caregiver's burden of having to remember.

Keep important documents like medical records, prescriptions, or medication instructions close by.





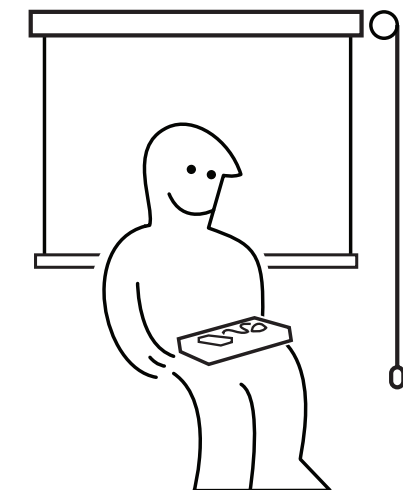
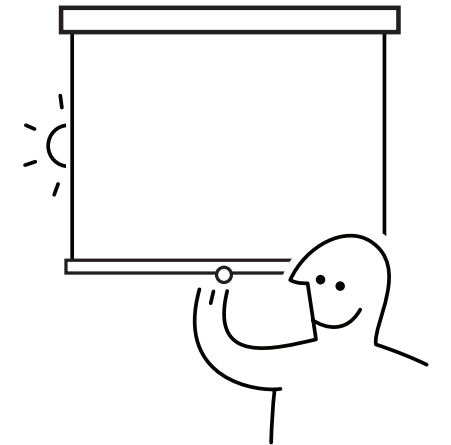


Windows offer beautiful views but also let in direct sunlight, especially if they are west-facing. Blinds help to protect the care recipient from the glare's discomfort.

## Draw the blinds

While the armchair is usually in a fixed location, there are times of the day when it may lie in the path of the sun's glare. If that happens, draw the blinds on the ALGOT. They are so easy to operate that Albert can draw them himself.

Albert can draw the blinds to protect himself from the sun's glare, keeping his space comfortable.



The ALGOT is really Lucy's personal alcove, giving her a private space-within-a-space.



# Imagination creates possibilities.



EVEN  
MORE  
OPTIONS

**ALGOT MAXI**  
Storage, shelving, pegboard, blinds, and everything else.





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# FIDGET PLAY

For many of us, touch is an intrinsic sensation. We twiddle our thumbs, letting our fingers run through things and surfaces in search of tactile delight. In this chapter, we explore fidgeting as a productive, therapeutic activity.



# Keeping in touch

## THE FIDGET BOARD: A HAPTIC ASSEMBLAGE

Throughout our lives as human beings, we use the sense of touch to soothe, comfort, and reassure. We can see this in the calming effect that touch has for both mother and infant—communicating emotions that transcend speech. For many adults, excess of stress and anxiety can be relieved through a “mindful” tactility, re-centering the body through the stimulus of the fingertips against textured surfaces. The power of this should not surprise us. After all, each fingertip contains more than 3000 nerve receptors that send signals to the brain!

Tactility can benefit dementia, also, in many ways. A 2010 study, for example, showed tactile massage appearing to reduce the rate of cognitive decline among adults with “severe” dementia. Carers, meanwhile, have broadly observed the soothing effects of texture through fidgeting, passive stimulus

via fingers, and the like. The feelings of anxiety or discomfort at multiple stages of cognitive decline can be alleviated via a thoughtful use of touch.

At the same time, tactile activities can be used to lessen boredom, and provide interest, during moments in which carers have responsibilities—such as laundry, or meal preparation—which necessarily lead to periods of limited social interaction. These may be combined with other sensory media, such as music, as well.

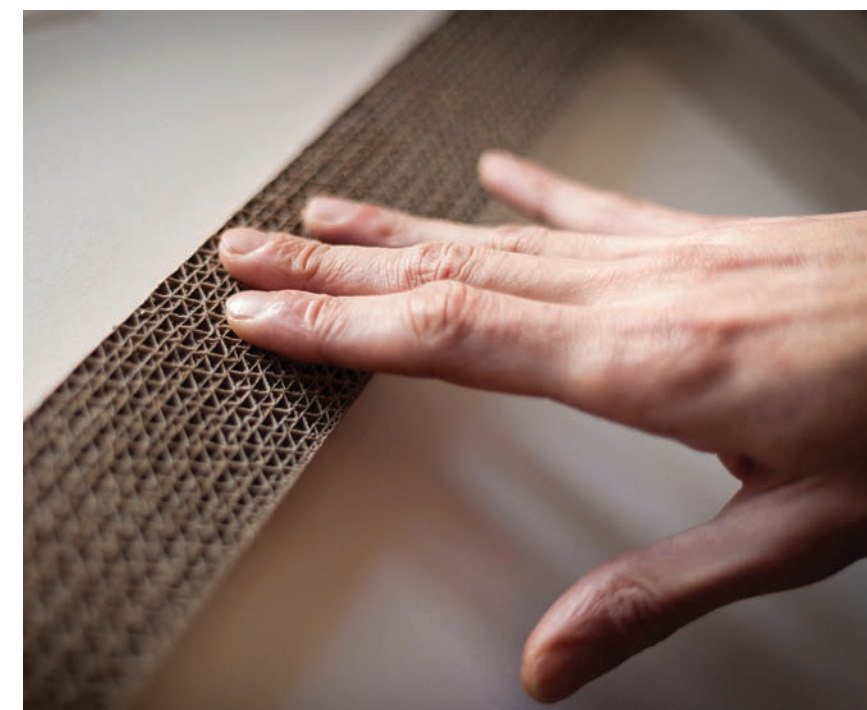
Luckily, tactile surfaces (such as so-called “fidget-boards” and “fidget blankets”) are easy to hack, and may be customised in infinite ways. These can be assembled using basic hand-tools, or simple sewing skills—making them an easily-accessible amenity for carers to rely upon.

While the possibilities are endless, there are a few common types:

“**Finger-tracing**” elements produce paths that a finger can follow, linking tactile stimulus to direction and path-finding—linking hand and eye to negotiate a specific cognitive task, or passively running a finger across a circuit of string or other linear textile. Tracing boards can be created using a range of base surfaces. They can be built on a cushion or throw-pillow, or a blanket. For an example of something firmer, we’ve shown a standard kitchen chopping board. As variety is an important source of renewable stimulation, you may want to hack together multiple, using the opportunities of different materials for a range of experiences. Elements to trace are often linear: twine, threads, edgings, or even “dashed lines” of buttons or ornaments.

**Moving parts**, such as beads, can likewise provide a range of tactile experiences. These work best when following a string or wire, like a rosary or Buddhist meditation bracelet. Because beads are available in a wide array of sizes and materials, these may stimulate visual senses as well. Fidget surfaces may include a collection of any small items chosen for their tactile qualities—however, loose items (such as marbles) should be avoided due to ingestion or choking hazards. Small curtain elements that can be drawn, or flaps that can be lifted, are interesting mobile options to explore as well.

Other boards can take advantage of small **functional units**: zippers, bolt-locks, laces to tie, et cetera. These provide a clear challenge as well as tactile feedback. Individual buttons, keypads, or calculators can also add a gratifying response to a push—as well as some sound connecting touch to hearing.





Functions may vary in challenge, exercising fine motor skills that can fall into disuse in times of cognitive impairment (when they are less frequently tested). These can also recall tasks performed prior to the onset of dementia, stimulating memories of repeated activities from work or life.

However, tactile stimulation can arise from the **properties of a material itself**, and can be added simply to the arms of a chair (such as Poang!) in order to provide a “worry” surface for the fingers to stroke and experience. “Shag” or deep carpet, for example, can be very effective for this purpose, due to its tufts or tendrils. Patches of this, often available free of charge via carpet shops, can be sewn or glued onto existing furniture. Meanwhile, textiles such as corduroy or felt can provide different types of feedback to the nerves of the fingers, soothing mental stress or tension. It may be advisable to make multiple textures available to the user—contrasting smooth finishes (such as plastic) with knitted, indented or blistered ones (such as bubble wrap or natural cloth).

As a wealth of materials and functional items are available in the market, many cheaply or for free, we would encourage carers to source for many—to see which ones lead to a positive response, either singly or in combination. Fabric and DIY / crafting outlets are an excellent source, as well as IKEA and home-supply and hardware shops. Existing household items can find a new life as “up-cycled” elements to be attached to a fidget board (old calculators, laces, soft toys, or brushes are all great examples). Many other useful materials come as packaging from e-commerce delivery services. At the same time, some highly tactile items, such as “bump-ons” and leather-repair patch kits, come with built-in adhesive patches and can be easily added to the arms of chairs or sofas.

Adding tactile resources to an environment is (as with so many aspects of dementia care) a process of

experiment. Certainly, some items are more effectively suited to particular degrees of cognitive decline than others. But it is important to bear in mind that the sense of touch can provide therapeutic options for almost everyone, cognitively impaired or not, at many stages of life—and remains a helpful strategy with demonstrated psycho-social benefits.

**DO** combine items of different tactility, size, and visual appearance; combine multiple activities on a single fidget board or blanket; reuse outdated or excess household items.

**DON’T** use small or unsecure items at risk of ingestion or choking hazard; use glue or epoxy to affix items to the fidget surface; use sharp items or elements that may pinch.



Combine items of different tactility, size and visual appearances. Even soft fabrics can vary in texture. Try sewing them together into a patchwork quilt.



## From chopping board...

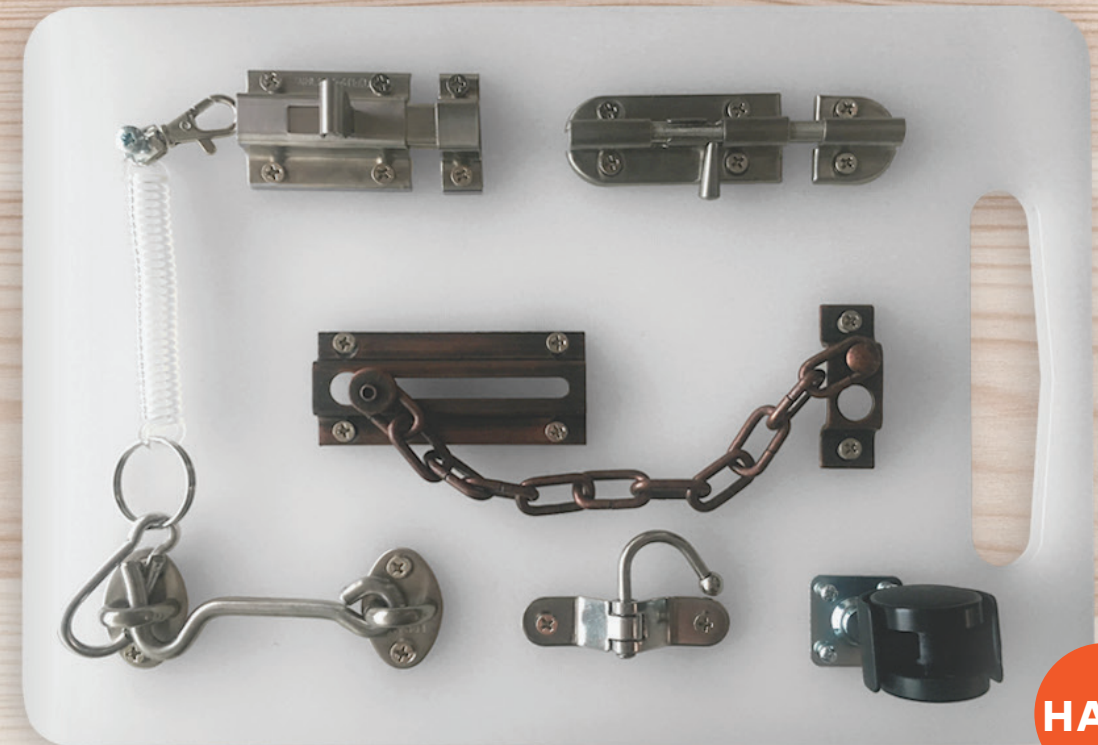


**LEGITIM**  
polyethylene chopping board

**\$2.90**

The basic parts of the fidget board are simple, affordable and accessible. A cheap polyethelene chopping board offers an easy-to-clean surface to which simple found objects can be attached, creating tactile exercises for restless fingers.

## ...to fidget board



**HACK**



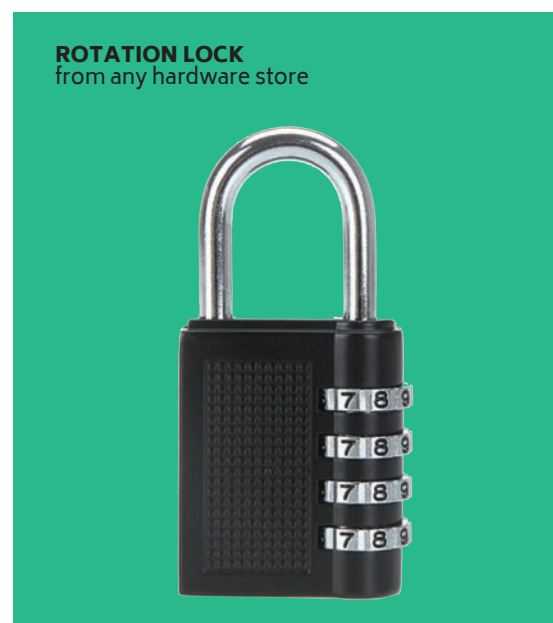
It doesn't have to be pristine. You can recycle old locks and trinkets for your new fidget boards.



# Working with familiar objects



Padlocks are easy to grab and hold, and their shapes conjure tactile familiarity. Most care recipients would have lived through the daily ritual of handling and unlocking similar padlocks throughout their lives.



Other kinds of padlocks like those with numbers and alphabets are a chance to give the fingers a work-out. Numbers and alphabets also promote cognitive activity.

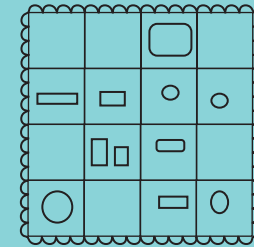


Pick a board surface that can be easily cleaned and scrubbed. Doing so removes germs and ensures a clean and hygienic experience for the fidget board user. To really get rid of germs, wipe the surfaces regularly with alcohol-based sanitisers.



# Soft and gentle to touch

We know that soft surfaces are comforting and gentle to touch. We also know that finger activities like knitting — where fingers hold an instrument and move purposefully with yarn — are a therapeutic exercise. We bring both ideas together in the fidget blanket, tapping into finger activity as a form of therapy.



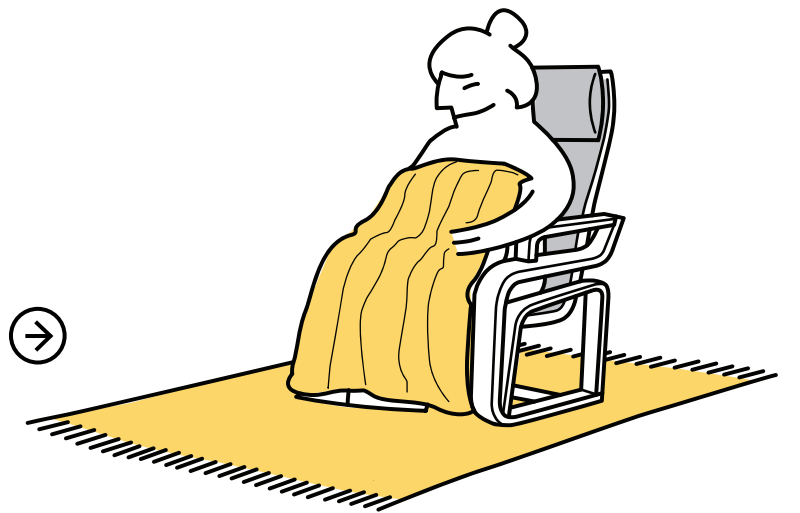
## Fidget Blanket

Quilted cotton blanket with sewn-on pockets and objects

For additional options or assembly instructions, see [www.hackcare.sg](http://www.hackcare.sg)



The sensation of a covering blanket or a rug under one's feet evokes warmth and cosiness.





# The joy of fidgeting

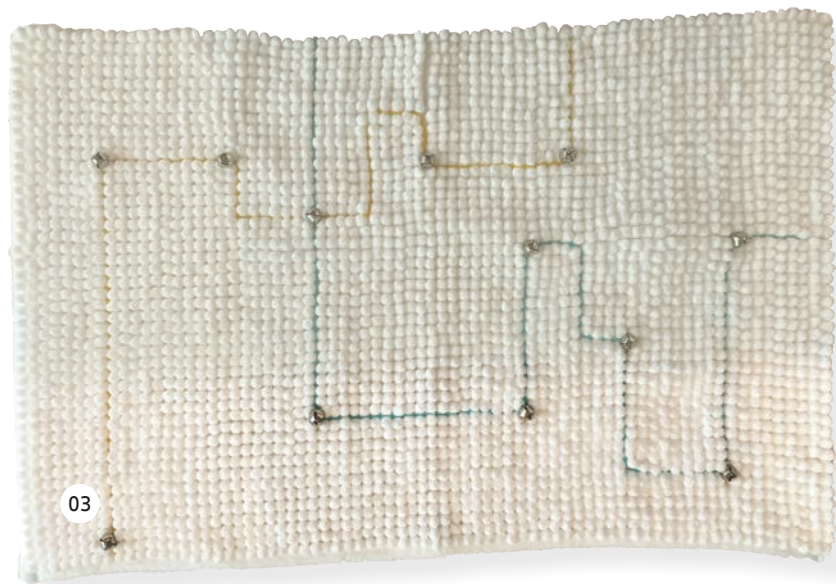
Holding, grabbing, running one's fingers across soft or textured surfaces are exercises that offer tactile delight. They help to release nervous energy and calm the mind.



01



02



03

**DIY FIDGET CLOTH**  
get creative with everyday objects

**01 Touch** is intrinsic to the human need for intimacy.

**02 Fabrics** are delightful to hold.

**03 Tiny buttons** offer moments of tactile surprise on fidget fabrics.



Having different objects with different colours on the fidget board allows for varied tactile experiences to stimulate and engage the care recipient.



## FAMILIAR TO THE TOUCH



The touch and feel of familiar objects from one's past rekindles memories of bygone days. Use these items to create a rich fidget board experience.







# Bases come in all shapes and sizes.

It's up to your imagination, and it's all about what Lucy feels when she holds its edges. Smooth, round, textured, small, large — pick one that is right for her.

06

04

03

02

**CHOPPING BOARD**  
small, plastic

**\$19.50**

01

05

**Hard surfaces** train motor skills: pushing, pulling, twisting. A strong, flat surface is a must, but may be more difficult to transport.

**01 Large wooden chopping board** Well textured, but tough to bring around.

**02 Small plastic chopping board** Light, easy to wash, but may lack tactility.

**03 Lozenge chopping board** Rounded edges are safer and feel better in the hand.

**04 Rubberised board** Rubber or silicone is safe and washable, at the cost of texture.

**05 Clipboard** Travel boards can be repurposed out of lighter material.

**06 Cake base** Virtually anything can be a board — be creative!

11

**COTTON BAG**  
stitch objects into the lining

**\$15.90**

09

08

07

10

**Soft surfaces** stimulate, relax, and are gentle to the touch of the hand.

**07 Cotton blanket** Warm, comforting, and large.

**08 Cloth throw** Thin and foldable, easy to wash.

**09 Pillow** Thick and soft, but hard to bring outdoors.

**10 Purse** Good for fidget play on the go.

**11 Cotton bag** Stitch objects into the lining.





**01 PLASTIC COILED LANYARD**  
from any stationery store

**\$0.50/ea**

**02**

**03**

**04**

Pick objects with inviting, varied textures, but limit yourself to 4 or 5 colours. Contrast helps the care recipient differentiate quickly and easily between different surfaces and objects.

- 01 Blue plastic coiled lanyard** Thin, flexible, manipulable.
- 02 Plastic switch** Neutral texture, distinct shape.
- 03 Brass hinge** Hard, cold, metallic surface.
- 04 Felt squares** Soft, warm, pleasant to touch.

Find objects that are washable or replaceable. They are often from the bath or kitchen section. You can pair and select these objects based on their washability.

- 01 Trimmed rubber placemat** Stain- and spill- resistant.
- 02 Wooden spoon** Removable and machine-washable in event of dirt.
- 03 Silicone safe-grab mat** Can be wiped down with a wet cloth to clean.



**01**

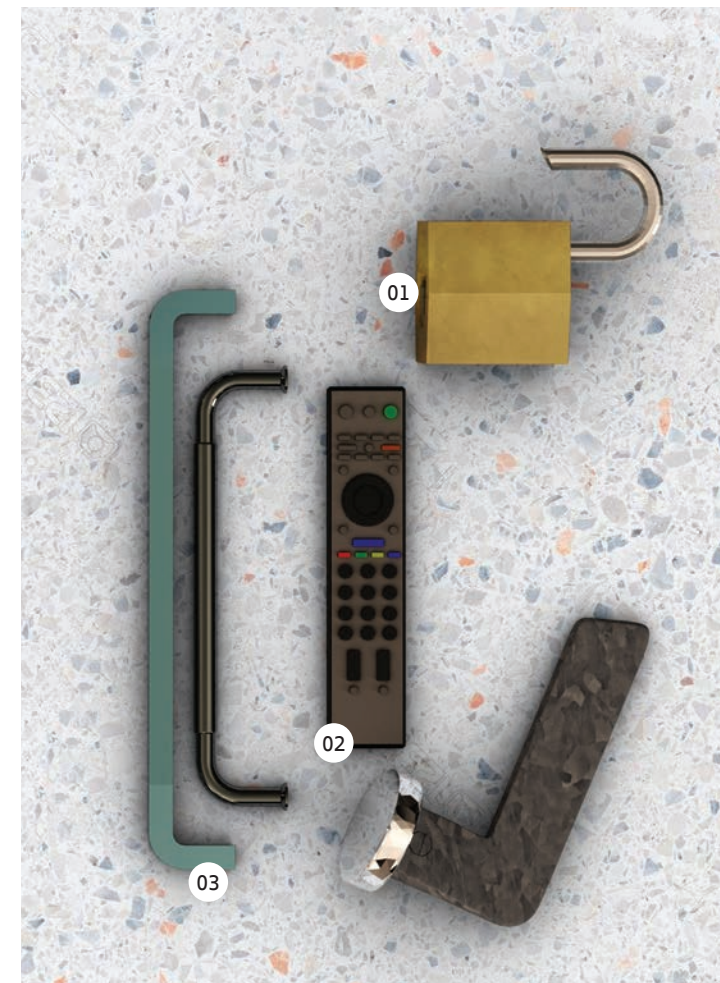
**SILICONE SAFE-GRAB MAT**  
local home supply stores

**\$3.50/ea**

**03**

**02**

# Objects for fidgety fingers

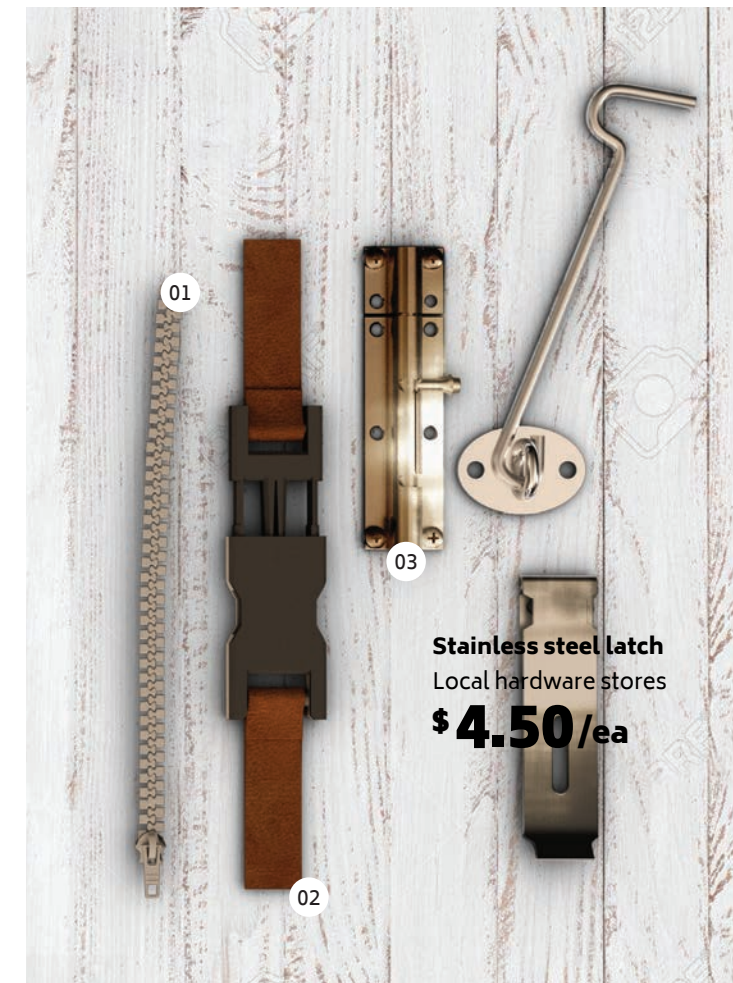


**01**

**02**

**03**

- 01 Locks, various types** Numerical, padlock, latches.
- 02 Remote control** Small buttons to push or prod.
- 03. Handles, various types** Choice of knobs, levers.



**01**

**03**

**02**

**Stainless steel latch**  
Local hardware stores

**\$4.50/ea**

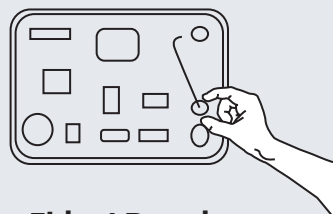
Soft, malleable, or fabric items can be easily sewn on to blankets. Hard items are better suited for boards. Avoid objects that are bulky or heavy.

- 01 Zipper with fabric base** Ideal for sewing onto fidget blanket.
- 02 Belt buckle with trimmed cotton belt** Stitch belt ends to blanket.
- 03. Deadbolt, latches** Comes with predrilled holes — easy to install.



# Solid & reliable

This tried-and-tested board is ideal for putting those fine motor skills into practice. Its component parts are easily available from your local hardware store.



## Fidget Board

Wooden board with mounted tactile objects.

For additional options or assembly instructions, see [www.hackcare.sg](http://www.hackcare.sg)

- 01 APTITLIG chopping board From IKEA.
- 02 Plastic light switch From any hardware shop.
- 03 Deadbolt
- 04 On-off switch
- 05 Number lock
- 06 Key lock
- 07 Baggage lock Doesn't have to be TSA-approved.
- 08 Chain bolt
- 09 Latch







Add interactive widgets, like zips or laces as playful options. Bonus, they train motor skills too.

01

02

03

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## Softly touch it

This patchwork quilt is equal parts comforting and convenient — just stitch on an array of soft, flexible items to round the fidget blanket off.

**FIDGET QUILT**  
patchwork cotton quilt

**\$29.90**

- 01 Silicone widget** From IKEA.
- 02 Plastic coiled lanyard** From any stationery shop.
- 03 Leather belt** From your closet.
- 04 Zipper** From old jeans or a craft store.
- 05 Shoelace** From an old pair of shoes.
- 06 Felt and leather patches** Bits and pieces of unused fabrics.
- 07 OMTÄNKSAM** From IKEA.
- 08 Ribbon** From a craft store.



# Do-It-Yourself, with family

Now that you've got the basics covered in this chapter, you're ready to start building your own fidget board or blanket. Involve the whole family in the fun of making.



## GOOD THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES

FIDGET PURSE  
portable fidgeting  
**\$5.90**



- 01 Purse** From a local trinket store.
- 02 Buttons** From a craft store.
- 03 Denim fabric** From an old pair of jeans.
- 04 Iron-on felt patch** From a craft store.
- 05 Carabiner** From an outdoor sports store.
- 06 Plastic Coiled Lanyard** From a stationery store.





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# LIVING TABLE

The table is central to life, community and conviviality. It is a surface that empowers its users to interact and engage with others. It is also suitable for activities like handicrafts and home gardening. Welcome to life around the table.





Eating together is no small thing. For much of human history, the sharing of meals is what has kept social groups together—a symbolic moment of familiarity and collective care. The circle of the campfire meal is perhaps that ritual that most preserves humanity. In many cultures, even now, the family meal is the one sacred (and jealously preserved) moment. *No matter what else happens, we eat dinner together.* This is even encoded in our language: in English, at least, to “break bread” with someone carries the meaning of friendship, cooperation, and camaraderie.

As dementia progresses in severity, however, the challenge of eating together grows dramatically—and as a result, many of our Alberts and Lucys tend to dine by

themselves, in the company of a dedicated carer. This is not intended as a gesture of exclusion; rather, the effects of cognitive impairment (and the challenges of feeding) make shared meals sometimes impractical or uncomfortable. For small families and couples, assisting a loved one in eating means that one must eat, oneself, later.

However, maintaining shared meals—and the warm conviviality that this embodies—is a crucial task. Firstly, this reduces a sense of isolation. Even within a small space, it is possible to lead separate lives; the dining table is the one place where we can confirm all as members of the family unit. Medical evidence has shown repeatedly the negative effects of isolation on dementia severity: decline increases dramatically when one spends excessive time alone, and without being

engaged in conversation<sup>1</sup>.

A second factor is the interaction that takes place during the meal itself. When we eat, we talk. This means that dinner is the perfect opportunity to re-engage all of our loved ones in simple interactions, which challenge the mind and work against the progress of cognitive decline.

This means that eating together is one of the “normative” rituals that we must work hardest to save. But how?

Often, the pressure to eat separately arises from simple pragmatic concerns: portioning, serving, ensuring against choking (or attempts to eat non-edible items). Tabling a meal is one of the most complicated domestic tasks, and is made significantly harder by the added hurdles of dementia. As a result, a major area of “life-hacking” lies in the clever tweaking of meal service to alleviate some of these complexities. Segmented plates, for instance, may help in the portioning process—and in picking up food with greater ease. Smaller spoons help to reduce “shoveling” of stews or rice, reducing somewhat the risk of choking. Likewise, smaller cups make swallowing of liquids easier. Removing

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6097646/>



small convenience-items, such as chopstick rests, can bring a measure of relief if we are concerned that these might be mistaken for food.

Likewise, we might take advantage of the relatively inexpensive pricing of items at Ikea (or even Daiso) to anticipate the loss or wear of familiar items, and to make sure that we have many of these on hand. For example, a ready supply of a familiar cup or bowl (purchased in bulk) can help to preserve the comfort of familiar objects, even in the event of occasional breakage. The same is true for napkins and place-mats, which can bear the brunt of repeated use and staining.

We can also think more flexibly about how meals take place. Even if feeding our loved ones takes far longer than a typical meal-time, we can follow dining with activities—homework, web-browsing, reading—that also take place at the table. This extends the conviviality of the meal beyond the act of eating, meaning that companionship can occur even if the timing of meals becomes awkward.

This implies, also, that we can re-think the role and use of the dining table in order to spend more time together.



Tables that are mono-functional—that is, just for eating—will tend to encourage dining in shifts, and more isolation of those with dementia. However, if this surface becomes a multi-functional hub, more time will be spent together, and the spirit of conviviality and companionship can be preserved.

Likewise, the simple position of the table is also a powerful factor. If we position it close to a favorite chair, we will find it much easier to preserve casual, frequent interactions over the course of the day. Even if co-dining is not possible, we can preserve adjacency—meaning that multiple family members can still sit together. This is far less likely if “that chair” and the dining table are at opposite ends of the room, either by choice or by habit. This suggests that dementia may invite a re-thinking of the way we furnish our rooms: moving away from discrete functional clusters and toward more multi-programmatic conglomerations of different

furniture pieces. There is a natural tendency to “normalise” by preserving old (pre-dementia) arrangements; however, such good intentions can work against us as our families enter a new era of care.

The challenge of meals can be seen as a headache—or as an opportunity to re-think life in a new mode. We can begin to experiment with rearrangements, both of furniture and activities, to ensure that being together is a central priority of family life with dementia. We can re-position the dining table, potentially, as a lively centre of family activity, making it easier (and more pleasant) to be with, and watch over, our loved ones. After all, care for every family member was the origin of this practice in our earliest days as a species: the meal, the remnant of that old sheltering fire, remains a way to keep all together, and everyone safe.







## Life begins here

Family life often revolves around the dining table. Common family bonding rituals like meals and conversations promote interaction and inclusion. When the care recipient starts finding it difficult to move to the dining table, why not move it to him? That way, the care recipient reaps the benefits of being included in family interaction.

Meals are always a way to bring a smile to faces. The smell of delicious food, the taste of rich flavours, and the sound of joy and laughter all have a way of improving how we feel.



# YOUR OWN MOBILE TABLE



01 ÖVRARYD Tabletop  
02 KRILLE Leg with castor X 2  
03 ADILS Leg X 2  
04 BJÄRRED Drawer handle

## Living table benefits

This versatile table adapts to various scenarios and setups. During mealtimes, it can be wheeled to Albert or Lucy wherever they are seated. At other times, it can be parked on the side for other uses.



**1** Move where needed

**2** Hang convenient items

**3** Wipe fidgety fingers

**4** Contain your spills



# The table makes Albert happy

Beyond social interaction, the table offers a work surface for life-affirming rituals and therapeutic activities. Tidying, gardening, or even the simple act of resting one's elbows against the table allows for moments of personal joy.



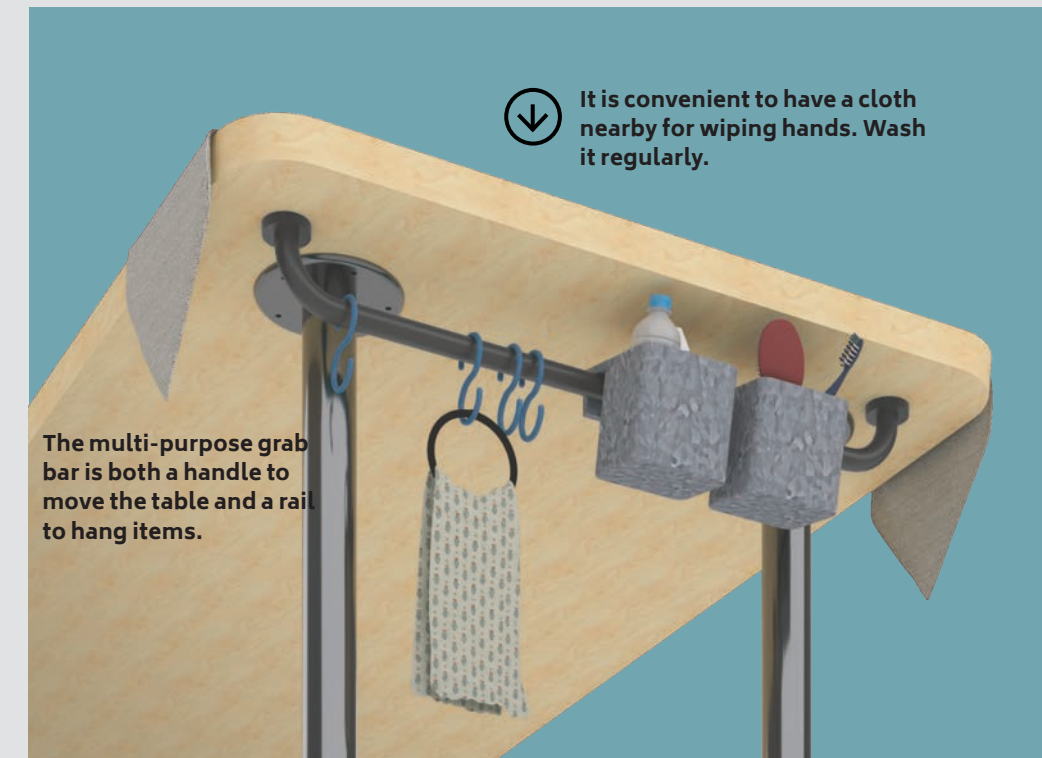
Potted plants — and the act of caring for them at the table — offer a relationship with nature that engenders psychological well-being.

There is something comforting to the ritual of tidying — redirecting jittery energy toward a productive and meaningful activity. Give the care recipient simple tasks as a form of work therapy, to spark a sense of achievement in them.



The table offers simple joys like a convenient surface to lean one's elbow in a pose that invites a relaxed state of being.

## For your added convenience.



**SUNNERSTA container** From IKEA.

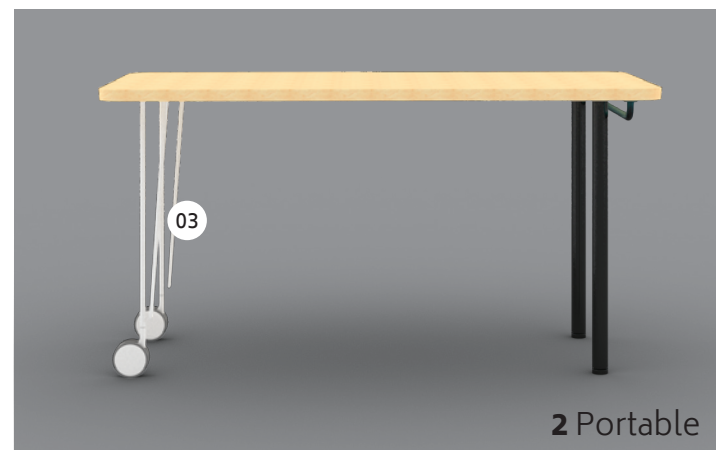
### Elastic table sock

If Albert's fidgeting dislodges the cloth cover often, consider trimming and sewing in a length of elastic to make a table sock.



IKEA's range of kitchen hooks works well with the grab bar. Hang rags, clothes, or anything Albert might need.





Move the living table wherever and whenever it's needed. It's versatile for multiple uses.

- 01 RYDEBÄCK** Plastic surfaces are easy to wipe.  
**02 OLOV height-adjustable legs** A lower tabletop matches the POÄNG's seat height for Albert's comfort.  
**03 ÖVRARYD/KRILLE tabletop with castor legs** The classic Living Table combination: affordable and adaptable.  
**04 SLÄHULT** Rounded corners keep Albert safe.

No more corner bumps! Round tables remove dangerous corners that are easy to bump into.



# The wonderful world of tables



Mobile butcher-blocks or kitchen island carts are at an appropriate height for carers. Supplement your ALGOT with these for an attractive, flexible and space-saving worktop.



Many households already have small folding tables. Consider tucking one of these at the Carer's Corner behind the POÄNG, so that it's ready and available for use anytime.



# Living life, one tray at a time

Trays are a way to organise life and change the scene. They offer practical benefits like containing mess and spills. Organise items into stackable trays based on different activities at the table, like gardening, painting, music. The possibilities for in-seat entertainment are endless.



## Spill no more

Serve food and beverages in trays to keep mealtimes neat, tidy and easy to clear.



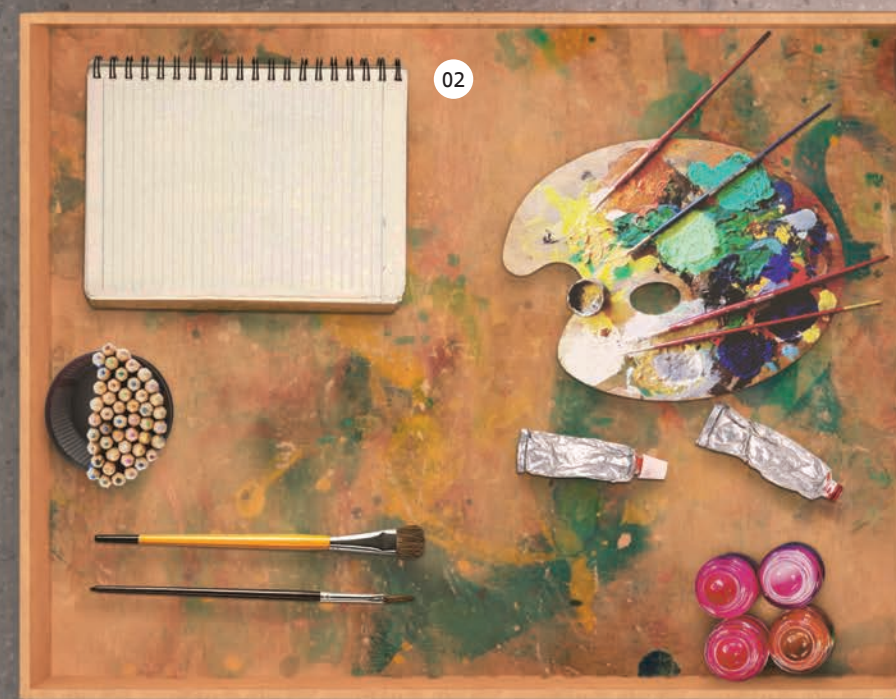
## Silicone safe-grab mat

Consider applying a silicone mat on bases to prevent items on the tray from slipping.



## Rims and edges

Tray tables with rimmed edges are a good way to contain spills.



Sort items into separate trays based on respective themes and activities.

- 01 Gardening tray
- 02 Art tray
- 03 Entertainment tray



# Community around a table

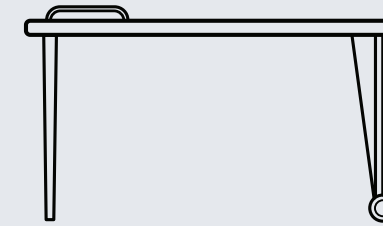
Interaction and intimacy make a huge difference. The immediate presence of friends and family offer warmth to the care recipient. Family members can let their everyday interaction and bonding activities take place around the persons with dementia, enlivening the space around them.



How about sharing the table with grandchildren doing their homework?



**EVEN  
MORE  
MOBILE**



**LIVING TABLE**  
Mobile table that integrates  
with POÄNG and ALGOT

For assembly instructions, see  
[www.hackcare.sg](http://www.hackcare.sg)



Bonding rituals like the preparation of Chinese New Year goodies often revolve around the dining table. Let the care recipient join in on the fun!



Living tables come in  
all legs and sizes.



There's a table for every occasion,  
and a hack for any table.

Hack your table, hack care.





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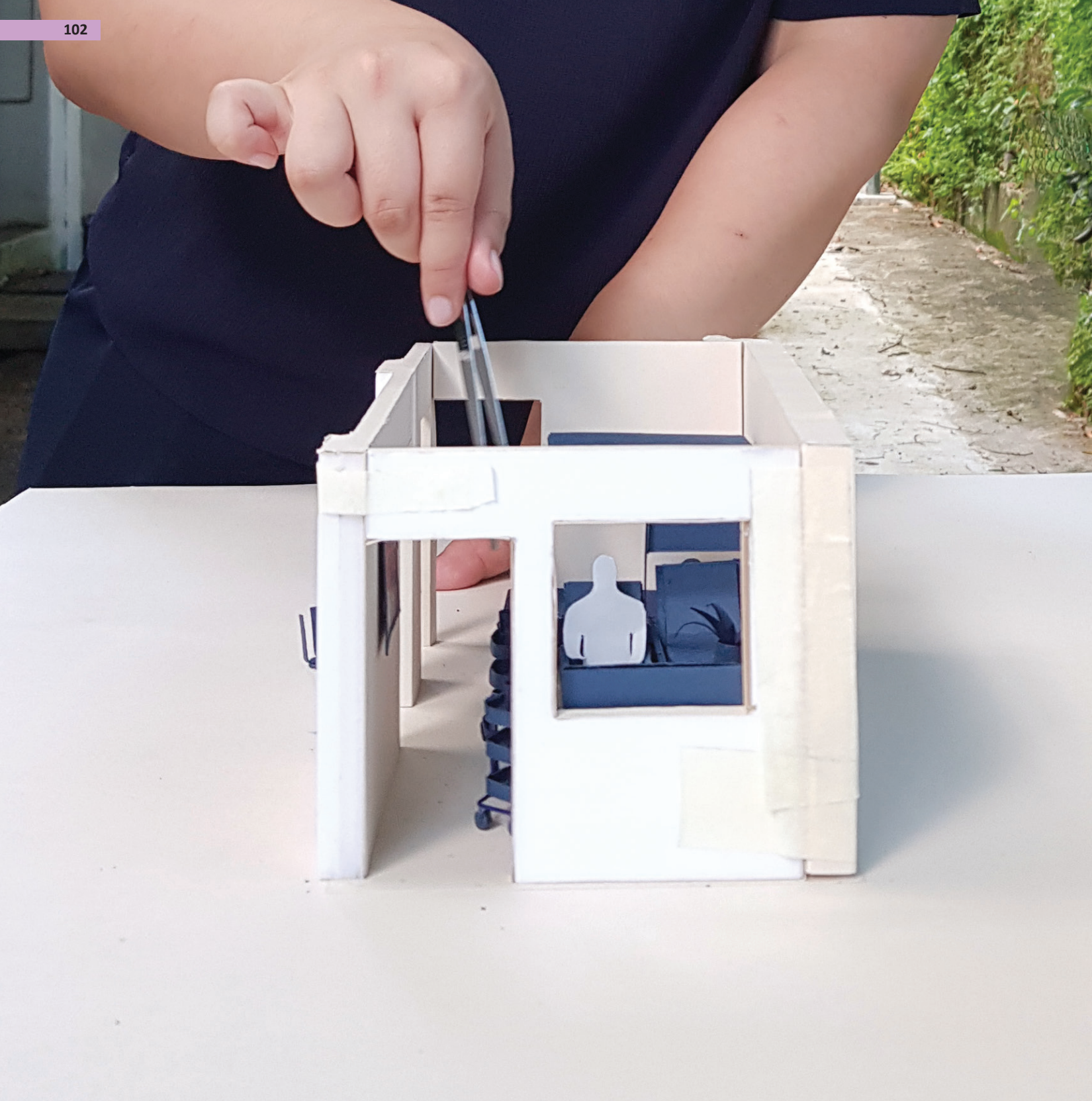


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# THE NEW ROOM

Furniture forms an essential component to how we experience habitable space. Their arrangement offers a scaffold for daily living. We should treat furniture groups as dynamic and living, since they can be continuously re-configured and updated to enable richer and healthier lives for both the carer and the cared.





## Building our own worlds

We create our worlds and these worlds create us. Furniture form part of our world and are always more than what they seem. Furniture arrangements should evolve along with the care recipient's needs. As we do this, we can modulate comfort and familiarity with enclosure, shared spaces and the strategic display of familiar items.

For the person with dementia, a reconfigured home environment can be an intimidating affair — it makes the environment a bit unfamiliar. There are ways to smoothen the transition. Start with shifting the little things first, until the time is right to rearrange the larger furniture. Given their impact and presence, the ways we arrange our furniture and objects can provide the "building blocks" for better and richer lives.



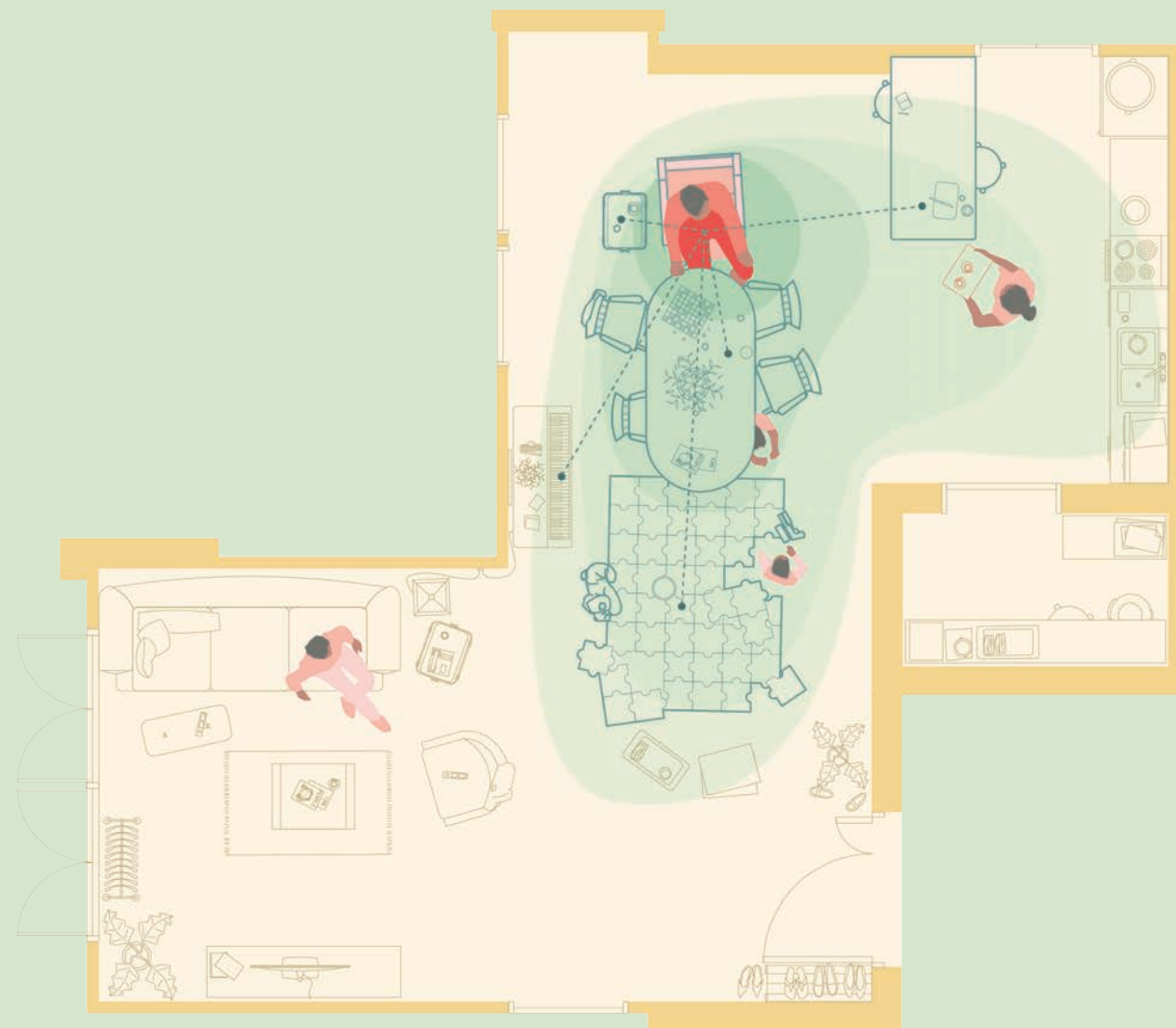
# Stay active, get involved.

The care recipient is still active and independent during the early stages of dementia. Take into account their mobility habits and provide suitable rest stops to enable this independence while arranging the furniture. Ensure clear and open sightlines that allow passive supervision over the care recipient. This also encourages eye-contact and greater interaction.



Place the POÄNG chair near activity areas of the home like the dining table or the open kitchen island. This creates opportunities for the care recipient to assist with simple tasks and cultivates opportunities to bond by doing things together.

**01 HACKED POÄNG arm chair** Refer to chapter 1 for more information on the POÄNG.



## Active life, active mind

Make it easy for them to perform activities around the home. Encourage them to move around by keeping everyday items in view.





SLAHULT  
dinner table

**\$199**

How about letting the grandchildren play near the POANG chair? Sharing common space is a great way to create intimate bonds.

## Mealtime accompaniment

Regardless of the care recipient's unique needs, we should normalise his or her social environment where possible. Try letting mealtimes occur in the presence of others. This creates a jolly atmosphere with meaningful face-to-face engagement.



The kitchen island or dining table are good areas for the care recipient to assist with simple kitchen tasks. These tasks help resist the progress of dementia.

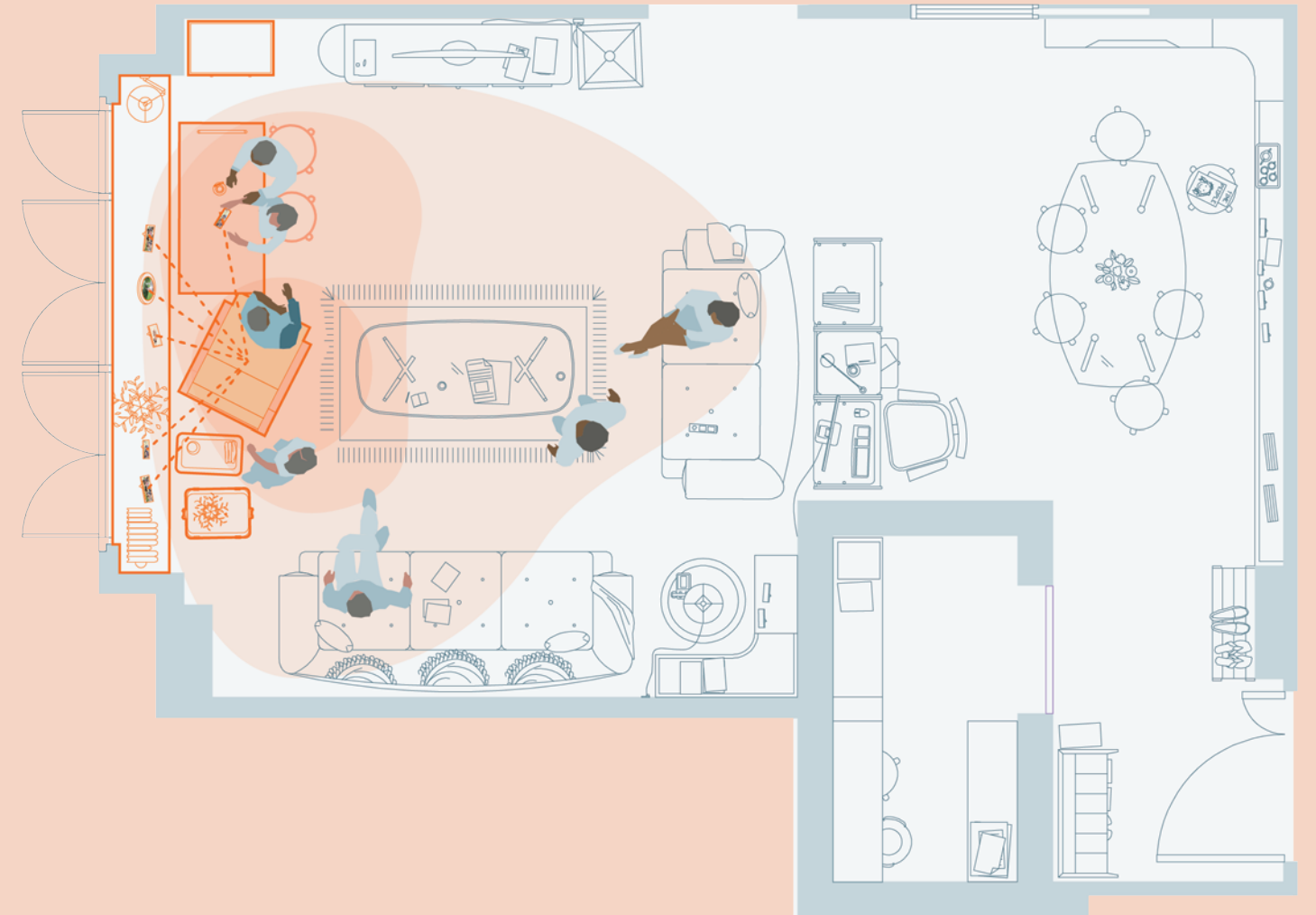


# Memories made material

As dementia progresses, the care recipient may become less active, spending more time at rest instead. Personalise the environment around the care recipient by displaying familiar objects and photographs. These items help to jog their memories of fond events and are also good conversation starters when guests come to visit.



Have a “memory corner” near the armchair where photos and memorabilia are displayed. This could be a wall or a shelf. These items can trigger fond memories of events in the care recipient’s life — affirming their personhood and sense of self.



## Make new memories

Memories do not just reside in the photos and memorabilia. Cherish the present moments that we spend with the care recipient — these become precious, positive memories for everyone.



HYLLIS  
shelving unit

\$19.<sup>90</sup>

Dedicate a space or shelf close by for family photographs, keepsakes, or even scents. Such a "memory corner" is an anchor of familiarity, providing comfort to the care recipient.



## A cosy room is a comfortable room.

Try arranging the furniture in a way that feels harmonious and agreeable. It provides a reassuring environment for the care recipient.

It helps to have the RÅSKOG close by with essential items within an arm's reach. That allows the care recipient to conveniently satisfy simple needs.





# Ageing together

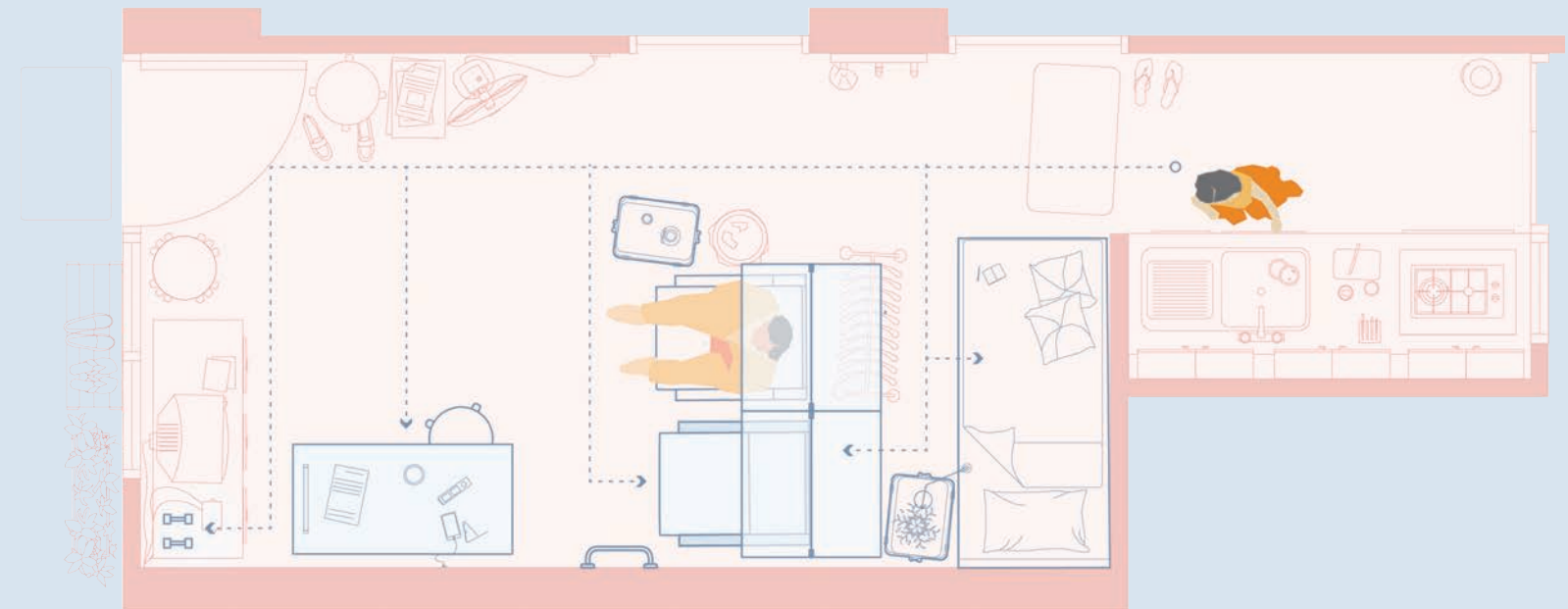
In some situations, the spouse is the primary caregiver. These seniors may need to rest often, and may not be able to exert themselves. We can arrange the furniture in ways that simplify their workflow and reduce their burden. The ALGOT can also carve out an adjacent alcove from where they can watch over the care recipients.



## The caregiver's alcove

Place a lounge chair behind the ALGOT to create a space where the care giver can take frequent breaks or steal a nap. They will still remain close to their loved one.

**01 ALGOT shelving system** Refer to chapter 2 for more information on the ALGOT.



## Seamless Workflow

Arrange the furniture to simplify the caregiver's workflow. This makes life easier for the them.



Doing things together is an act of love. The Living Table and the POÄNG need not be just for the person with dementia. Sharing meals on the same furniture removes that divide between “us” and “them.”



## Compact room, compact caring.

For compact home environments where space is precious, try assigning multiple uses to the furniture. For example, the Living Table can double up as a convenient “nurse station” for the caregiver, instead of being the care recipient’s exclusive table.

Single furniture, multiple users — sharing is our solution to compact caring.



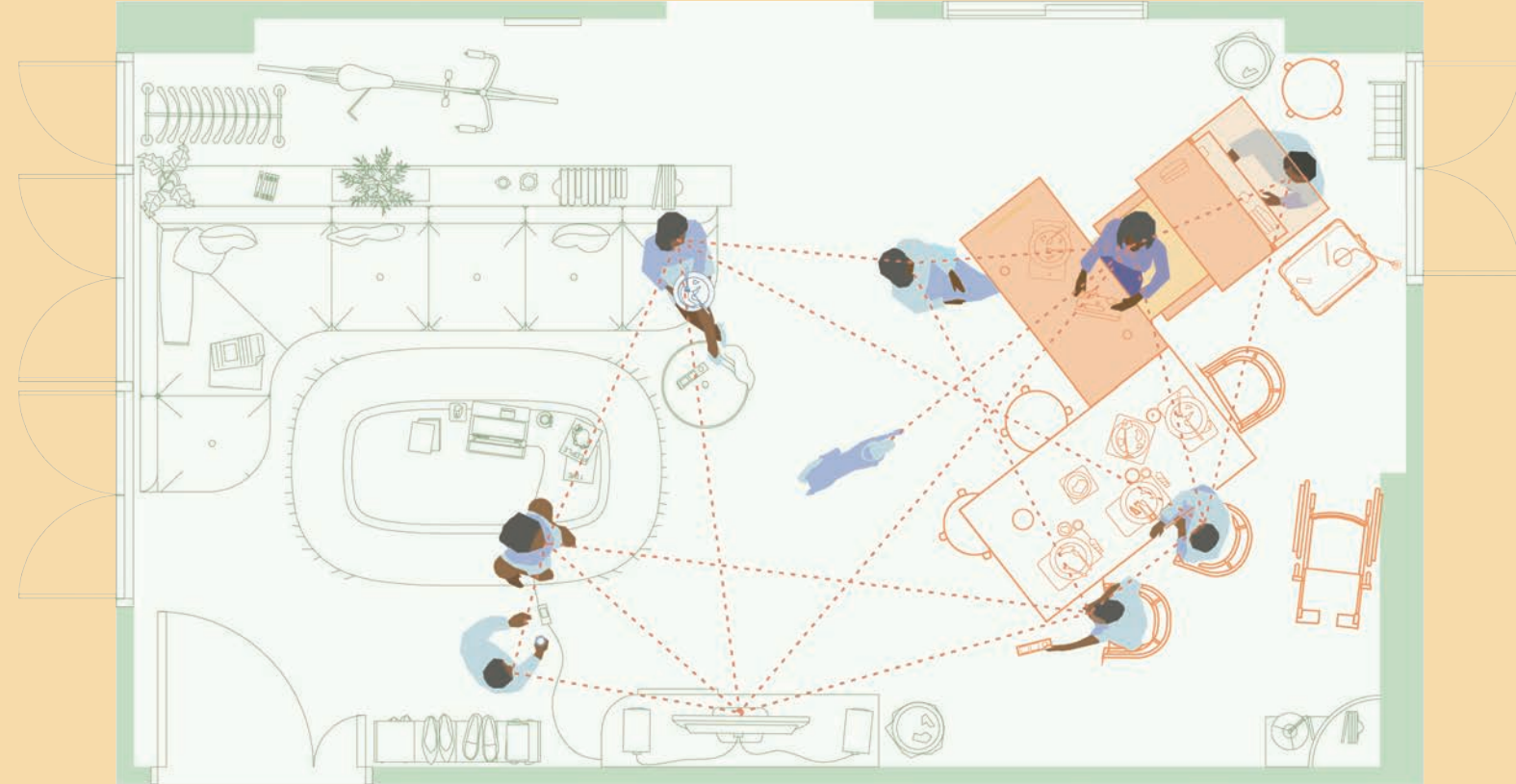
# Centre of attention

The care recipient becomes less active as dementia progresses to an advanced stage. Ensure that family rituals remain inclusive by organising meals and activities close to where the care recipient spends most of the day. This places him or her at the heart of the family.



Convene the social gathering around the care recipient. Not only does this create an inclusive and convivial setting, it also provides positive social stimulus for the care recipient to respond to.

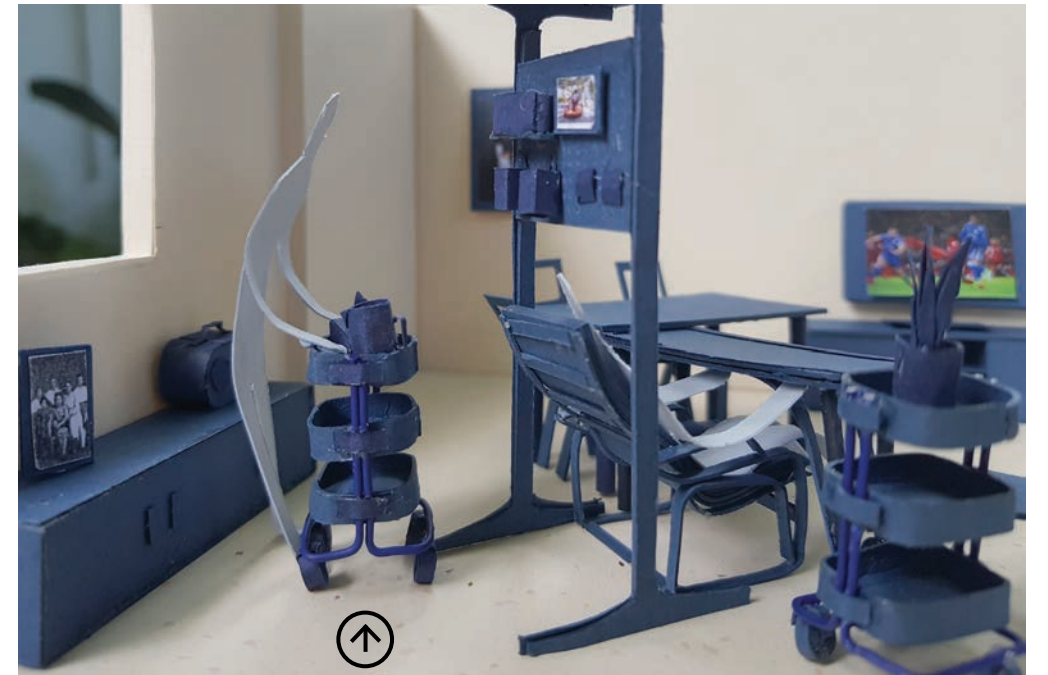
**01 LIVING TABLE** Refer to chapter 4 for more information on making your own living table.



## Interaction around the chair

Let family activity occur around the care recipient. This normalises the immediate social environment, helping him or her feel included. Take care not to overwhelm the care recipient by regulating the amount of social stimuli.





How about another RÅSKOG for the caregiver to organise his or her caring kits?

Simple adjustments to the furniture layout bring the family closer. Just tilting the care recipient's chair into a diagonal facing position creates an inclusive and open arrangement. Shift the television to re-centre the living space closer to the care recipient.



# FORM FOLLOWS FAMILY.



## Relationships matter

Breakfast, dinner, homework, gossip — simply being present and close by can make a difference.





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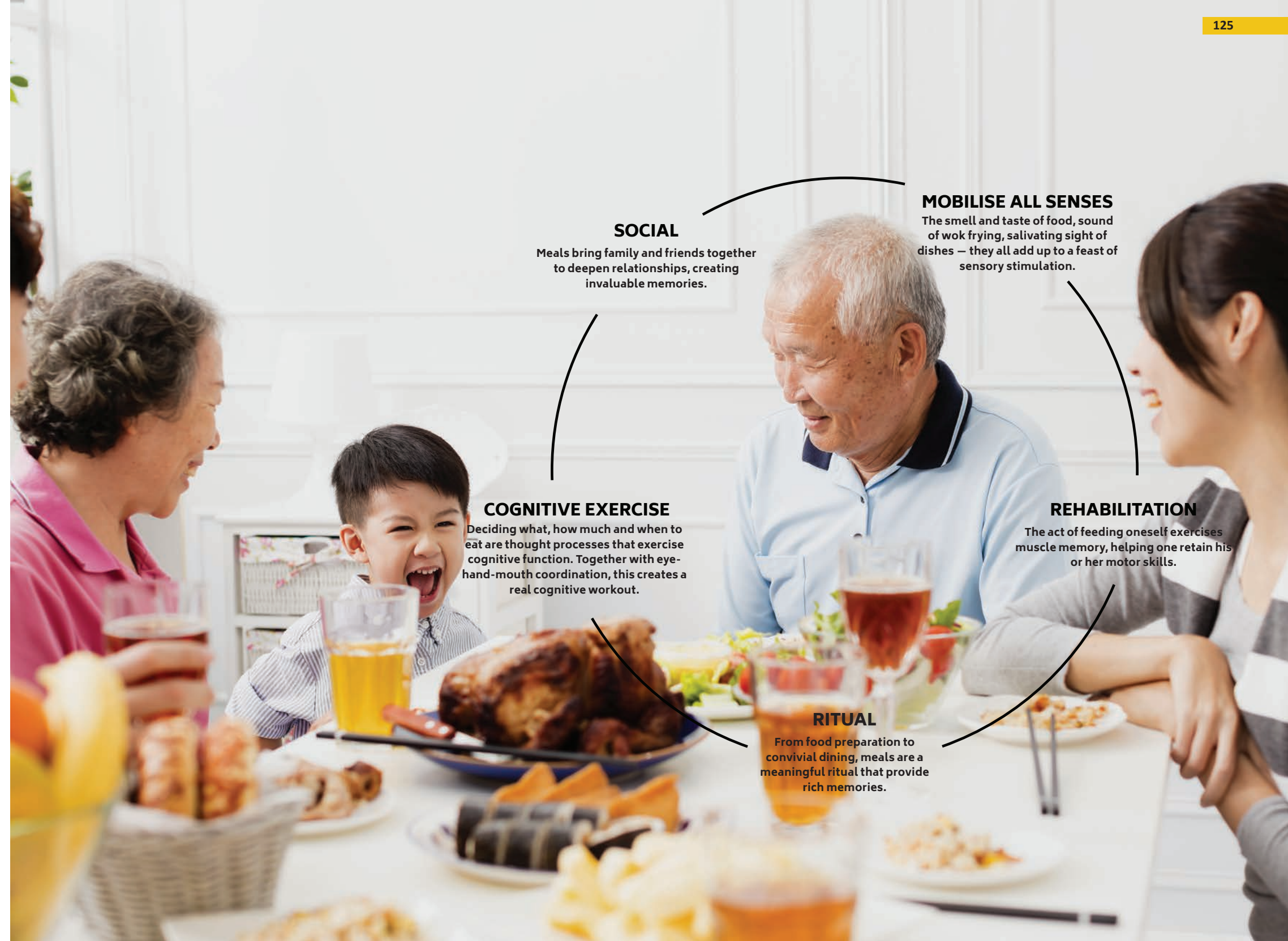
# MEALTIME

Mealtime is often a highlight of the day. The flavours, tastes and conversations all evoke a rich experience that builds emotional bonds. Meals are also an opportune moment to exercise choice, cognition and coordination. Approaching mealtime as a positive activity creates joy and meaning.



# More than just eating

Mealtimes involve more than just the perfunctory act of eating. They bring family and friends together in a shared ritual. Additionally, mealtimes are an opportunity for physical and cognitive exercise — deciding what and when to eat, working our hand-eye-mouth coordination, stimulating our sense of taste and smell. The complexity behind each of these activities can resist the onset of dementia.



## SOCIAL

Meals bring family and friends together to deepen relationships, creating invaluable memories.

## MOBILISE ALL SENSES

The smell and taste of food, sound of wok frying, salivating sight of dishes — they all add up to a feast of sensory stimulation.

## COGNITIVE EXERCISE

Deciding what, how much and when to eat are thought processes that exercise cognitive function. Together with eye-hand-mouth coordination, this creates a real cognitive workout.

## REHABILITATION

The act of feeding oneself exercises muscle memory, helping one retain his or her motor skills.

## RITUAL

From food preparation to convivial dining, meals are a meaningful ritual that provide rich memories.





Red is not just auspicious. It is also a contrasting background colour that allows care recipients to better see their food.

## Food brings people together



Festive holidays like Chinese New Year, Hari Raya, and Deepavali are all reasons to feast. Regardless of culture, food brings people together in powerful ways that create bonds, community and memories. Sharing meals affirms one's sense of belonging and connectedness to the community.



Traditional rituals like "lo hei" help to trigger positive associations and memories of similar experiences in the past. Small design adaptations, like hard primary-colour backgrounds, make the table setting legible and allow care recipients to participate fully in these meal rituals.





## Engage through the act of cooking

Involve care recipients in cooking and preparation. When they work with their hands and fingers, they tap into procedural memory — exercising their brain and stimulating their senses. The act of cooking also provides a sense of purpose, allowing them to feel cherished and involved.

Tools like the mortar and pestle offer a sense of familiarity, triggering procedural memories of traditional ways of cooking.



Maintain cognitive function by tapping into procedural memory.

Trigger the sense of touch, smell and taste through food, textures and flavours.

Cultivate the sense of purpose in preparing food for loved ones.

Exercise hand-eye coordination, preserve dexterity.



## ACTIVITY ZONE



Lowering the kitchen work surface allows food preparation to take place ergonomically from a sitting position.

02

03

RÅSKOG  
trolley

\$59

The RÅSKOG is not just for storing. Care recipients can also use this versatile cart to wheel food to the table.

## COOKING ZONE

Conceal dangerous tools in cupboards and drawers where they cannot be seen. Switches to stove tops can also be concealed.

# A kitchen for you, a kitchen for me

Separate the kitchen into two zones — an Activity Zone (safe, no fires) and a Cooking Zone (functional, with open stove cooking). The Activity Zone enables care recipients to be safely involved in food preparation, while the separate Cooking Zone allows caregivers to cook nearby.



Lucy loved cooking, and she always did it with pride and care. Providing her family with tasty and nourishing dishes gave her a sense of purpose. As matriarch of the kitchen, she had command over every dish. Today, she still remembers so much of it — how to de-vein the shrimp, how finely to chop the garlic, how rice wine brings out the aroma. Cooking gave Lucy autonomy, power, and purpose.

**01 BERGTUNGA chopping boards** Cutting surfaces in bright contrasting colours help one see the food better.

**02 BLANDA MATT bamboo bowl** Choose large, durable bowls for food preparation to prevent spills and breakages.

**03 RÅSKOG trolley hack** The trolley doubles up as a storage unit and a serving cart to bring food from the kitchen to the table.



# If I can cook, so can you!

In the preparation of meals, assign care recipients tasks that suit their ability to instill confidence. Use colour and other design interventions to make the kitchen visually legible, encouraging safe and independent use.



## 01 Use timers as reminders.

It's easy to lose track of time. A simple timer with an alarm is an auditory reminder for things to be done.

**ORDNING timer** From IKEA.



↑ **Preparing rojak does not involve heat — it is a safe (and flavourful) way to work one's hands while tapping into procedural memories.**



## 02 Large dishes resist spills.

With large unbreakable bowls, breakages and accidental spills are now a thing of the past.

**BLANDA MATT bamboo bowl** From IKEA.

## 03 It's safer when it's not hot.

It's always safer when the food preparation involves ingredients and objects that are not hot. Washing vegetables, making sandwiches or even tossing a salad are fun ways to prepare food away from the danger of a stove.



## 04 Colour contrast for safe cutting.

Cutting surfaces with bright primary colours help one see the food better. Consider plastic knives for a safe cutting experience.

**BERGTUNGA chopping boards** From IKEA.

**KALAS cutlery set** From IKEA.

## 05 Sort ingredients legibly.

Prevent confusion with clear, transparent containers and easy-to-read labels.



# CONVENIENT PREPARATION, EASY COOKING



## For both the carer and the care recipient

Meal kit delivery services like Hello Fresh deliver pre-packed ingredients with easy-to-follow recipes. This makes it simple for caregivers to prepare sumptuous meals. Even care recipients can join in the fun — easy peasy, lemon squeeze!



# FROM FARM TO TABLE



SOCKER  
plant pot

**\$2.90**

## How about growing your own food?

Being involved in food preparation is not limited to the kitchen. Growing herbs and vegetables, and being part of the therapeutic process of cultivating plants could give the meal an added personal touch.

**01 SOCKER plant pot** From IKEA.

**02 BASIL herb** From the fruits of their labour.



How about renting a plot outside to grow one's own edible garden? Going out each day for a few hours offers a healthy dose of daylight too. Some sweat involved.



## ALLOTMENT GARDENING SCHEME

Garden plot lease to grow your own greens

By National Parks

## Get handsy with veggies

Growing herbs and vegetables is inherently therapeutic. Nothing beats working with one's fingers and watching a plant grow. If the kitchen feels too challenging, growing food may be a meaningful way to involve care recipients in creating their meals.



If going out is not an option, growing micro-greens and herbs at home is a great way to keep their hands busy and contribute to the dining table.



# To eat or not to eat

That is the question. Care recipients sometimes lose interest in food and need to have their appetites coaxed at mealtime. Others may have such insatiable appetites that they start to over-eat. We offer tips to encourage or manage the appetite.



## 1 Walks

Outdoor walks and physical exertion help work up an appetite.

## 2 Smell

Entice them with the delicious smell and flavour of their favourite food.

## 3 Table Setting

Setting the table can be a ritual — and a psychological prompt — to signal mealtime.

## 4 Re-focus

If they are over-eating, let them focus on other things. How about playing with the grandchildren or turning on the radio?

# THE SMELL OF FRESHLY BAKED COOKIES



LOCKBETE  
baking tray  
**\$9.90**

## Conjure an appetite

Stimulate appetite with the aroma of food, sounds of cooking, and other vivid sensations related to food.

01 LOCKBETE baking tray From IKEA.





### RESTAURANT OF MISTAKEN ORDERS

An eatery where all the servers are persons with dementia

▶ Visit [www.mistakenorders.com](http://www.mistakenorders.com) to learn more.

## I choose what I eat, and help out as much as I can

Let care recipients choose what to eat and help themselves with their servings. Deciding what, how much and when to eat — these are all thought processes that exercise cognitive function.



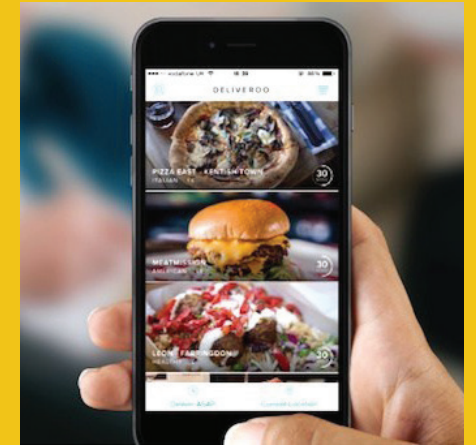
Even purée can come with variety and choice. Savoury purée? Fruity purée? Offer a range to choose from. Bento trays with different sections could be good way to serve a smorgasbord of purées.

**HEROISK compartment plate** From IKEA.



Let them choose from healthy options. Entice them with naturally colourful and sweet vegetables like carrots and sweet corn.

## CANNOT COOK, CAN STILL CHOOSE



### Delivery service apps are your friend

These apps offer a myriad of choices for home delivery. Let care recipients choose their favourite meals from the tantalising images of the tasty food. Swiping on a smartphone app is also a chance to learn new skills.





01

Avoid cluttering the dining table with unnecessary objects. Only the essentials will suffice. This reduces visual distractions during mealtime.



03

04

02

SCHOTTIS  
pleated blinds

\$4.<sup>90</sup>

Surfaces like cork or floor rugs help to absorb background noise, improving overall acoustics.

## The dining experience

Excessive environmental stimulation can often be an unnecessary distraction from one's meal. A brightly-lit dining room with acoustic surfaces, and curtains or blinds to conceal visual clutter could go a long way to enhance the dining experience.

**01 NYMÅNE pendant lamp** Sufficient lighting to ensure you can see what you are eating.

**02 SCHOTTIS pleated blinds** Conceal distracting elements like the kitchen area by drawing blinds or curtains during meal times.

**03 YPPERLIG table** A large table where the legs do not obstruct a wheelchair.

**04 JANINGE chair** A stackable chair system for easy stow away if a wheelchair is needed.



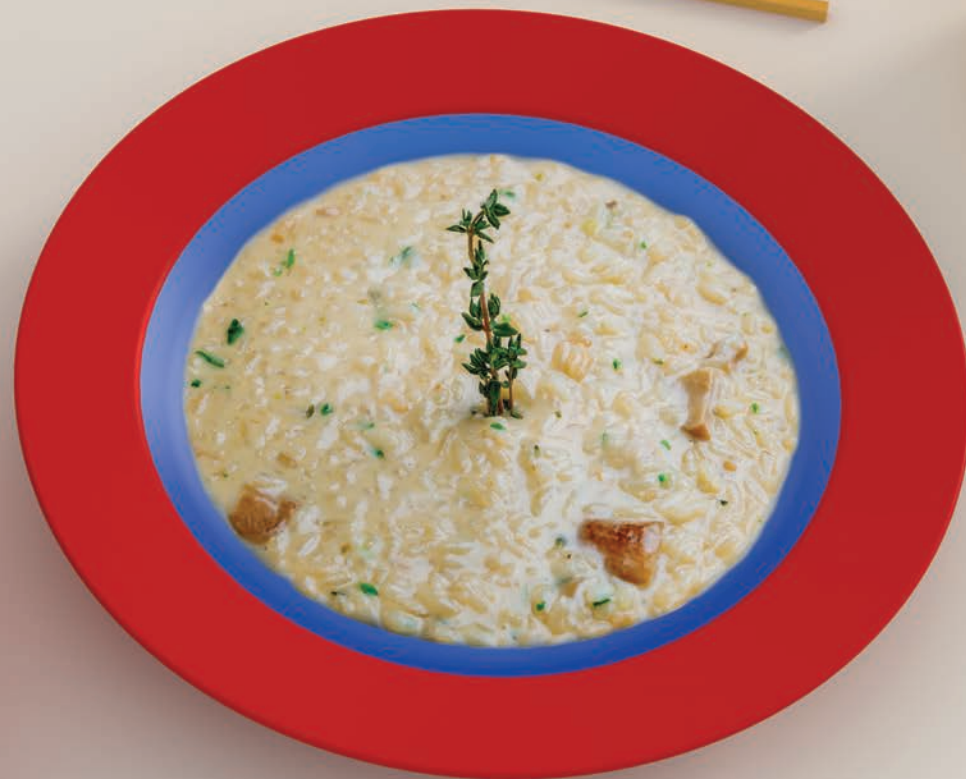
# Tableware

Keep table settings simple and free of clutter. Help care recipients focus on eating by avoiding visual distractions. Colour contrast also plays a part. Plates with bright primary colours make it easier for care recipients to see their food.

Research<sup>1</sup> shows that eating from blue-coloured plates increases food intake because blue contrasts well with food.



Portion food into separate plates and serve them one after another. This prevents care recipients from feeling overwhelmed.



Consider using tableware made from non-breakable materials like plastic. This avoids accidents and makes for a safer meal experience. Dishes with a larger circumference help to prevent spills.



Dishes with higher and steeper sides help to push food onto the spoon and also prevent spills.



Research<sup>1</sup> shows that red-coloured cups encourage water consumption. Choose cups that have ears which allow for easy hold.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15297089>

**TALRIKA red mug** From IKEA.

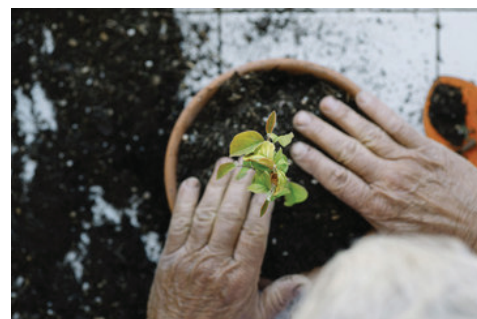
## FINGER LICKIN' GOOD



### Finger food promotes hand exercise

When using cutlery becomes a cumbersome affair, why not let them eat with their fingers. This lets them exercise their hand-mouth coordination — and it usually tastes better.





## Handy Work

Hands and fingers define much of our interaction with food — from making to eating. Muscle and procedural memory reside within our hands through simple actions like washing fruits or plucking beansprouts. Using one's hands is a meaningful way to keep one's mind active.

# KIAÄAP



MEDHJÄLPARE  
chopsticks  
**\$1.90** /10 pieces

### Fingering the chopsticks

Using cutlery and chopsticks requires finger dexterity, making it the perfect workout for motor coordination.

01 MEDHJÄLPARE chopsticks From IKEA.





## Hawker food, so yummy!

Tasty and delicious. Who doesn't love a hawker meal? Hawker centres are familiar and comforting places — the vivid sights and sounds evoke nostalgic associations. And let's not forget the many flavourful local dishes to pick from. Organise periodic hawker visits for care recipients to tuck into their favourite dishes.

Give them the option to choose between the food stalls or dishes, and let them serve themselves as much as they can.



## A DAY OUT TO THE HAWKER



### Be prepared for the day out.

Certain items will always be needed, especially when one is outside home. Pack a bag that carries these essential items so that you'll always be ready for the impromptu outdoor excursion. Tissues, a bottle of water, a change of clothes even — it's good to be prepared.

**01 Extra clothes** Have an extra outfit on hand.

**02 Water bottle** Doubles up as a fidget object.

**03 Tote bag**

**04 Umbrella**

**05 Tissue packets**

**06 Hand towel** Useful for cleaning and fidgeting with.

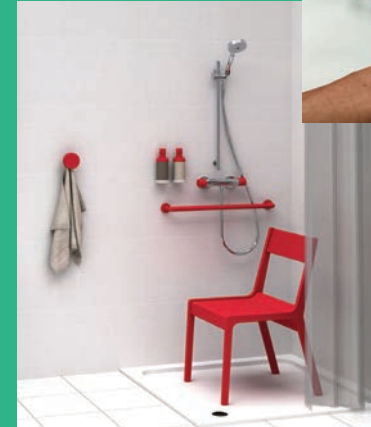
**07 Fruits** A healthy complement to the hawker fare.

**08 Hand sanitiser**





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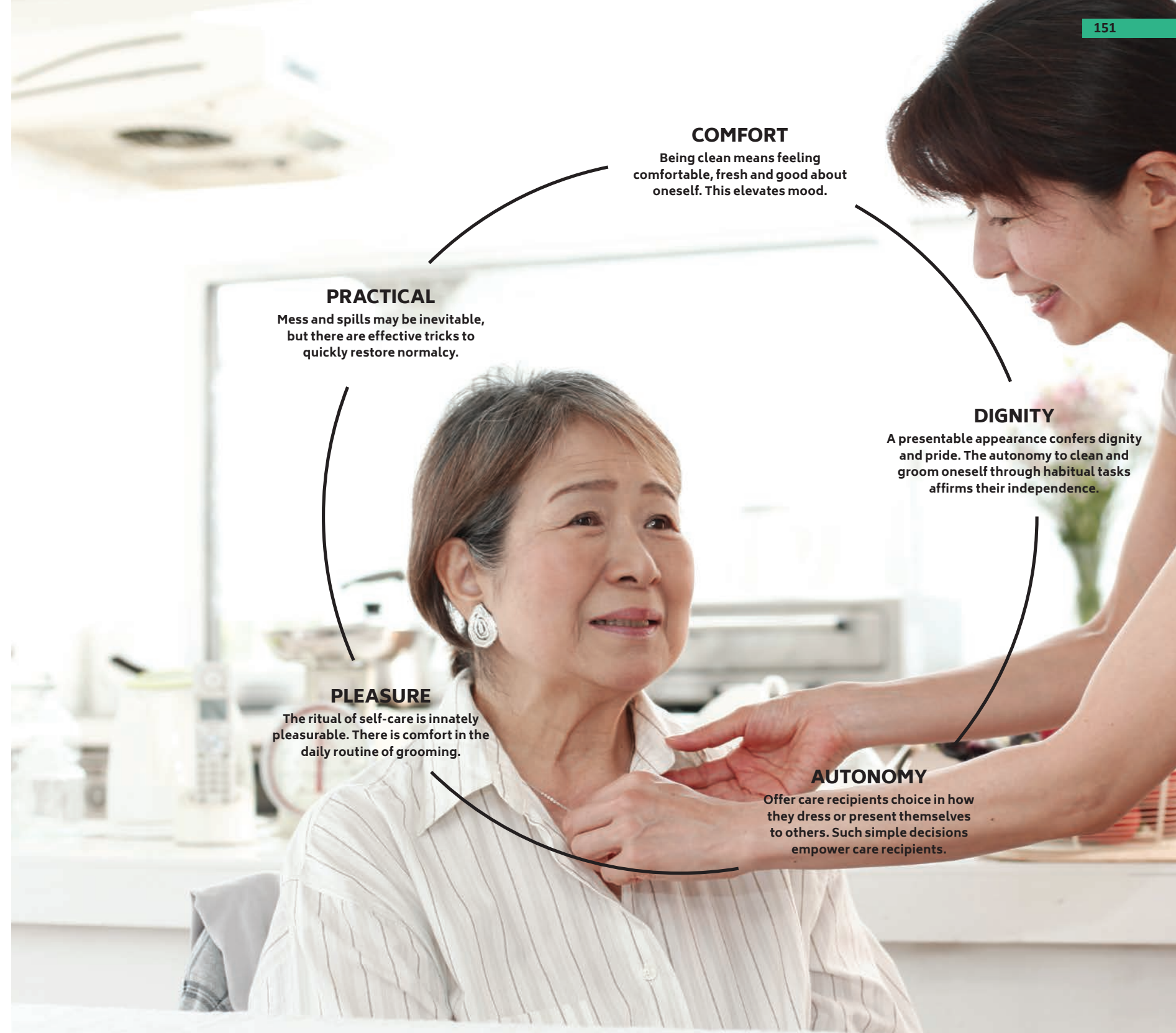
# CARE & CLEANING

Grooming and personal appearance affirm well-being and self-esteem. Dressing and tidying oneself not only uplifts the spirit, but also confers dignity through personal appearance. Cleanliness means feeling comfortable, fresh and good about oneself.



# Be clean, Be comfortable, Be happy.

Daily hygiene and self-care habits are comforting rituals that elevate mood and well-being. As a familiar and reassuring habit, grooming represents ownership over how one presents oneself to the outside world. The many basic tasks of grooming reaffirm personhood and sense of identity.



## COMFORT

Being clean means feeling comfortable, fresh and good about oneself. This elevates mood.

## PRACTICAL

Mess and spills may be inevitable, but there are effective tricks to quickly restore normalcy.

## DIGNITY

A presentable appearance confers dignity and pride. The autonomy to clean and groom oneself through habitual tasks affirms their independence.

## PLEASURE

The ritual of self-care is innately pleasurable. There is comfort in the daily routine of grooming.

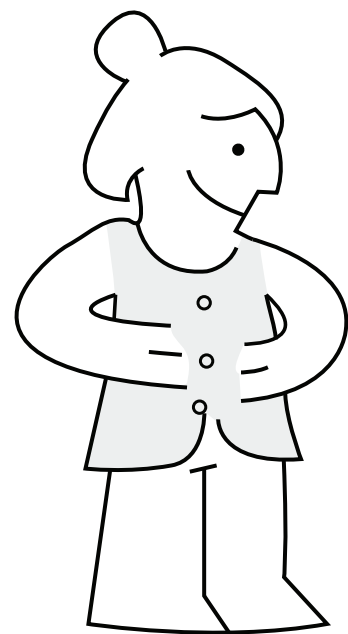
## AUTONOMY

Offer care recipients choice in how they dress or present themselves to others. Such simple decisions empower care recipients.



# Let Lucy do it herself, as much as she can.

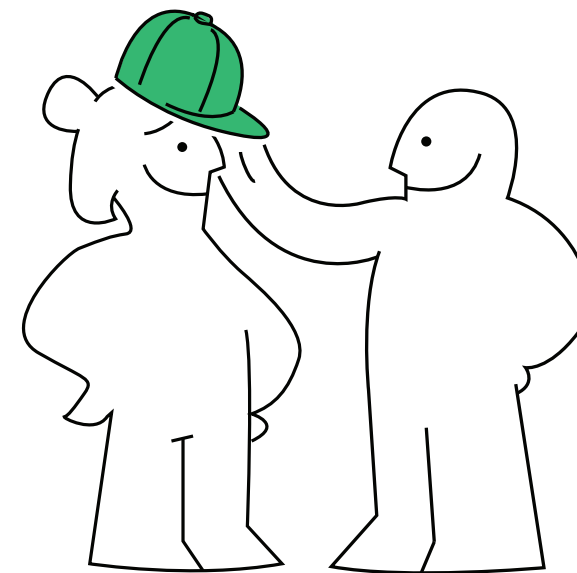
Maximise opportunities for independence, like dressing and grooming oneself. If they can do something on their own, they should. This exercises their hand-eye coordination to resist decline. It also affirms their personhood. Simply choosing one's outfit is already an act of empowerment through expression of preference.



**COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE  
WITH DRESSING ONESELF**



At this earlier stage where they are still independent, give them as much freedom as possible in selecting their outfits and allow them to put it on themselves. Keep a watchful eye while respecting their privacy. Only offer assistance when they are visibly having trouble.



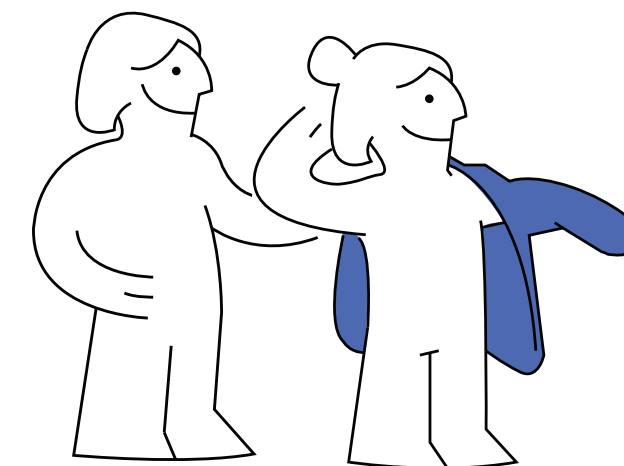
**MINOR ASSISTANCE  
NEEDED WITH DRESSING**



Encourage care recipients to help themselves, even if they need a little bit of help. Dressing oneself can sometimes be difficult with those hard-to-reach buttons and whatnots. Nifty tricks like replacing buttons with velcro are good life hacks.



When the care recipient is bedridden, dressing becomes a challenge. Recognise what micro movements (raising arms, tucking head) they are capable of and encourage them to do so when possible. Choose loose-fitting clothes to make dressing easier for both the carer and the cared.



**ASSISTANCE NEEDED  
WITH DRESSING**





Laundry baskets with lids are a quick way to hide soiled clothing. Caregivers can separately collect the soiled laundry in a way that respects care recipients' privacy.

**01 BRANÄS basket** From IKEA.



## Dress, and undress, with dignity.

Often taken for granted as a routine activity, dressing is actually a complex and challenging task. It requires shifting body postures and makes one feel vulnerable if undressed with other people around. Even after dressing, leaving soiled clothing behind creates further embarrassment. We should encourage care recipients to dress themselves, and redress situations that compromise their dignity.

**02 OMTÄNKSAM red grab bar** Attach grab bars of contrasting colours at areas where support is needed.

**03 HEMNES open wardrobe** Consider the use of clear cabinet doors or forgo them completely to be able to see everything at a glance.

**04 HILJA curtains** Surrounding the dressing area with curtains gives the care recipients privacy while changing, but allows the carers to be present in the room.



**02** Grab bars for support during changing.

See next page for hanger hack

**03** Let them see and pick at once.

**01** The laundry basket should be within easy reach.

**04**

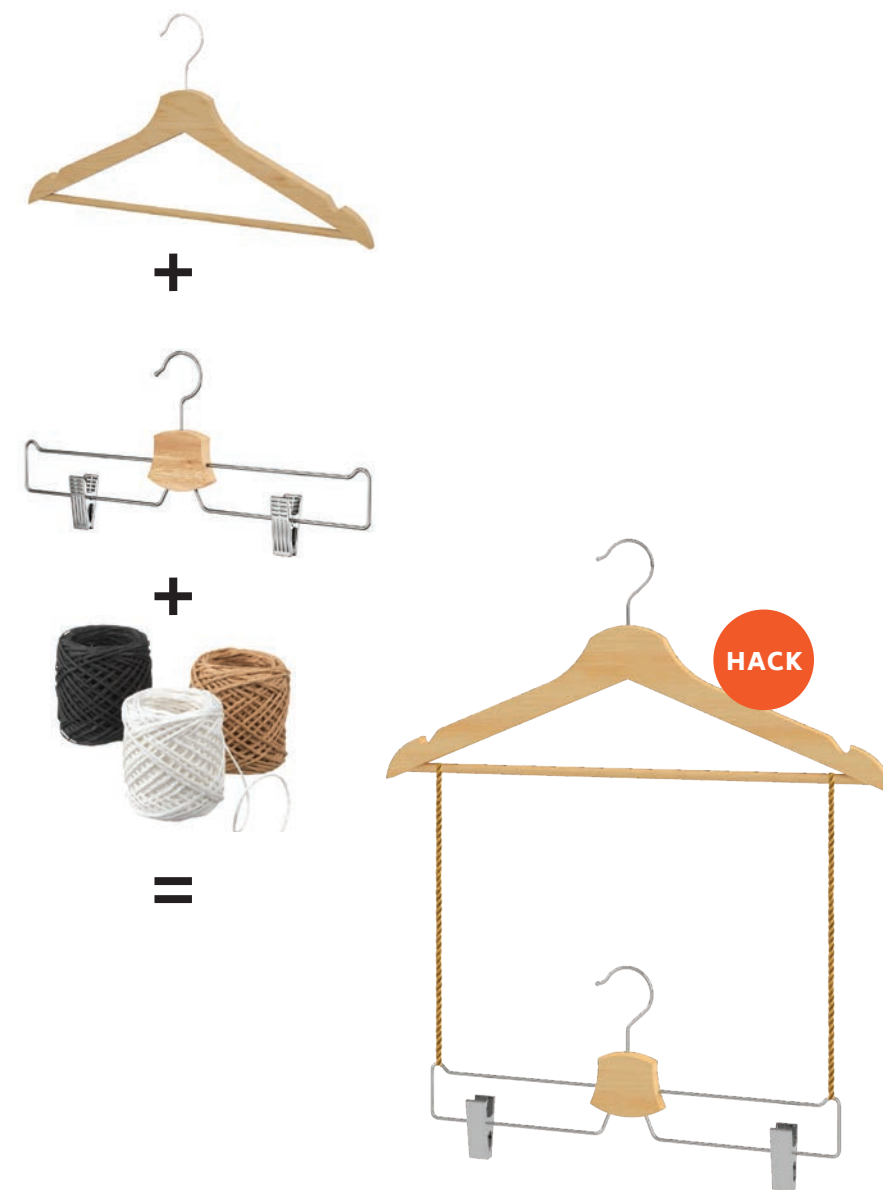
Curtains allow them to undress with privacy. The caregiver can still "watch over" them from the other side of the curtain.



# Wardrobe Autonomy

Dressing is a way to express oneself. Deciding what to wear is a form of empowerment. As dementia progresses, choosing an outfit sometimes becomes difficult and the sequence of dressing may be confusing. We can simplify their decision-making without compromising their ability to choose.

Simplify their decision-making. Pre-select two or three outfits for them to choose from. It is less confusing that way.



## SEQUENCE IT FOR THEM

Separate and pre-arrange their outfit in the order of dressing. Use this hanger hack to display clothes as an outfit.

**BUMERANG hanger** FROM IKEA.

**BUMERANG trouser/skirt hanger** FROM IKEA.

## SELF-EXPRESSION



The fun in dressing lies in the ability to express one's personality through fashion. Even toys and trinkets can be re-purposed into wearable accessories. Let them wear their creations. It gives them fun and ownership over how they present themselves to others.

**03 LUSTIGT lacing beads** FROM IKEA.





01

HACK

Mirror reflections can be scary and disorienting. A curtain in front of the mirror helps to remove an unnecessary trigger of confusion.

02



Define the edges of important surfaces like the vanity counter top with contrasting colours so that it is easy to perceive and navigate.



03



04



05

Accentuate important items with contrasting colours. A grab bar to hold on to helps prevent falls.



06

Having a comfortable, waterproof chair to sit on provides for a safe and comfortable bathing experience.



# Independence in the Bathroom

The bathroom is a wet space where slippery surfaces may cause falls. Nevertheless, small design interventions make the bathroom safer while improving independence. Colour contrast can accentuate useful items like grab bars and toilet seat covers, helping with navigation.

Keep the bathroom free of clutter so that it remains visually legible. Also, position the mirror such that it cannot be seen on entry. This is because care recipients sometimes perceive mirror reflections as other people. Doing so eliminates unnecessary triggers of confusion and fear.

**01 DYNAN wall shelf** Open shelf for easy access to items, which means less need for assistance.

**02 EGGEGRUND shower curtain** Shorten the shower curtain to conceal the bathroom mirror, minimising fright from their own reflection.

**03 LOSJÖN coloured hooks** Use coloured hooks for towels to indicate which items are for use.

**04 RINNIG coloured dispenser** Decant soap and shampoo into dispensers and if possible, use simple illustrated instructions.

**05 OMTÄNKSAM red grab bar** Attach grab bars of contrasting colours at areas where support is needed – toilet, shower area.

**06 JANINGE chair** A waterproof chair for a safe bathing experience.



# READY TO GRAB AND GO



## Readiness is a virtue

Pre-packed shower kits like this help the caregiver be prepared for shower time anytime.

**01 Toothbrush** If possible, brush your teeth together. This will help them with their routine.

**02 Shampoo** Get their favourite scent, which may cheer them up and reduce agitation during showering.

**03 Body Wash or Soap** Use one that is gentle on sensitive skin.

**04 FLODALEN bath towel** From IKEA. Place a towel over the person's lap so that he or she would feel less exposed.

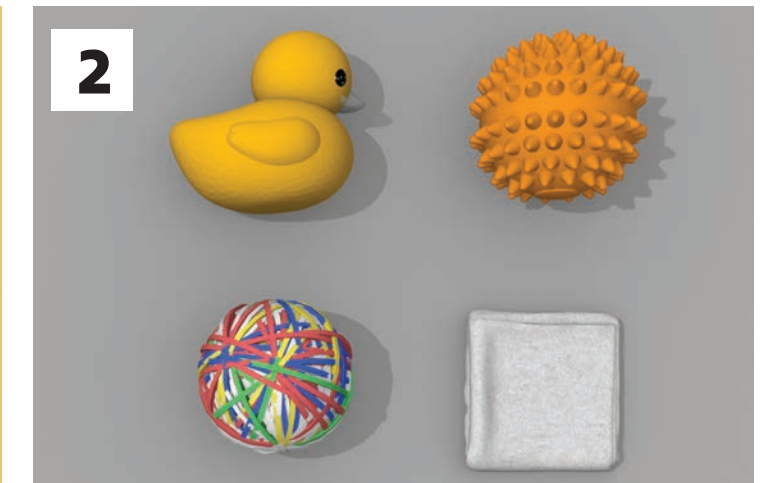
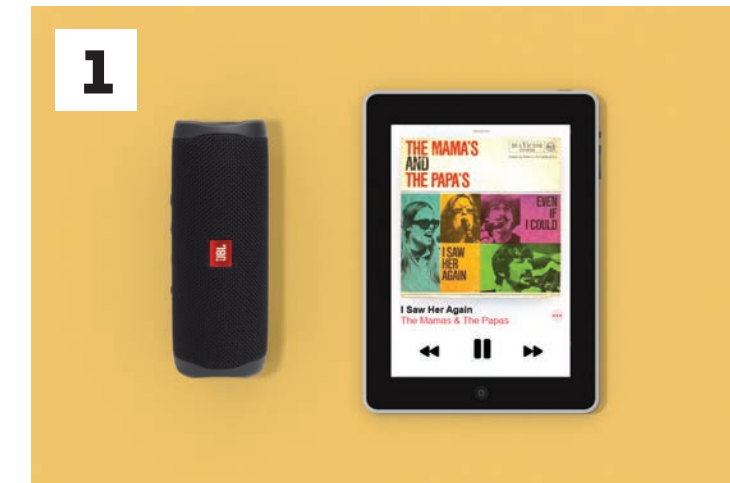
**05 Hairbrush** Hairbrushing as an activity strengthens bonds between the care giver and recipient.

**06 Bath sponge** If a shower is not possible, give the person a sponge bath.

**07 SAMLA box** A nifty box to store everything for an easy grab and go.

# You make bath time lots of fun

Think bathing is a chore? Don't be a bore. Make bathing a fun experience with these sensory add-ons.



## 1 Sound

Create a relaxing bathroom atmosphere with their favourite music.

## 2 Touch

Having something to hold and squeeze adds a little tactile delight. How about a rubber ducky?

## 3 Warmth

Give them a spa treatment with a heat compress. The warmth makes a world of difference.

## 4 Scent

Aromatic soaps and scents help soothe and calm the nerves.





### 01 Store spare mattresses for rainy days

Lightweight and reasonably priced, spare mattresses allow carers to be prepared for when accidents happen. Soiled mattresses can be washed and aired without disrupting comfort.

**HAFSLO mattress** FROM IKEA.



### 02 Have multiple pillows

A good dry pillow is essential for a good night's rest. Spare pillows are a good contingency for the occasional soiling or drooling mishap.

**ROSENSKÄRM pillow** FROM IKEA.



### 03 Less is a chore

Care recipients sometimes insist on wearing only their favourite clothes, even when they are being washed. Having multiple sets of their favourite attire avoids this problem.

## Have more, clean less

Accidents happen, and soiling clothes and sheets are inevitable. Having multiples of items like mattresses, pillows and the care recipients' favourite clothes help to make life easier for the carer. Extras can make all the difference.



How about shower curtains as under-sheet linings to protect the mattress? This makes cleaning easy and manageable.



### 04 Get creative with waterproofing

Shower curtains repel water and can be used to waterproof beds, sofas and other sitting surfaces.

**EGGEGRUND shower curtain** FROM IKEA.



# Don't forget the simple pleasures.



Touch makes a difference. Simple grooming activities like brushing one's hair are a gesture of care and love, engendering emotional bonds.

**Scalp massage brush** From any bodycare store.



# MMM... THE SMELL OF FRESH LINEN



## Cleanliness is Happiness

Daily cleaning rituals can be pleasurable. Feeling clean means feeling comfortable, fresh and good about oneself.

**01 FLODALEN bath towel** FROM IKEA.

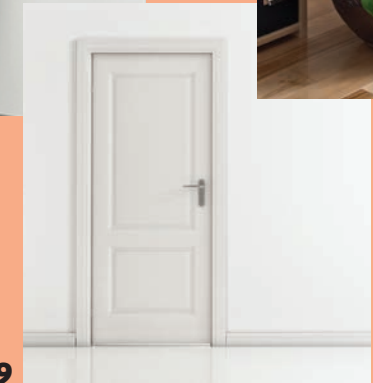




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# VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

As dementia progresses, it sometimes becomes difficult to interpret what one sees. Certain sights can be visually disorienting, even causing confusion and fear. It is therefore important to maintain visual environments that are calm and easy to understand.

Visual clarity begins at home.



## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE CLEARLY ANYMORE



As we age, it becomes difficult to differentiate between the plate and the food. Dementia exacerbates this challenge.

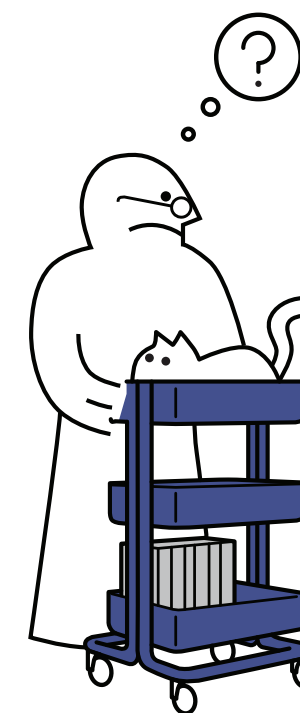


## Sometimes Albert has trouble identifying objects

Persons with dementia may have problems with visual processing even though their eyesight is still intact. It is sometimes a challenge for them to interpret and recognise everyday objects.



Visually complex patterns might be confusing. They cause problems with orientation and increase the risk of falling.





# Clarifying the Environment

As it becomes harder for care recipients to read and interpret their domestic spaces, it is important that we clarify the visual environment and render it more legible for them. We can highlight essential daily objects through colour distinction and reduce visual clutter by masking unnecessary or dangerous items — creating a safe and calm space that encourages everyday autonomy.

## INDEPENDENCE

When we understand our environment, we are less fearful of it, enabling us to navigate with greater confidence.

## LEGIBILITY

A clearly defined space with reduced visual clutter makes the environment more legible and easy to understand.

## CALMNESS

Clarity begets calmness. Care recipients are less likely to get agitated or frustrated in a clear environment.

## CONFIDENCE

A clearer environment improves awareness and perception of bodily motions, creating confidence in our actions and movements.

## SAFETY

It is always safer to navigate around a visually legible environment.







# Highlight the things that are important

Accentuate essential daily items or frequently used locations with wayfinding cues, colour distinction and brighter lighting. Do not be afraid to single out key elements for visual hierarchy and priority. This helps create visual order and clarity.

Colour contrast need not be limited to highlighting essential landmarks at home. They can also bring attention to memories and keepsakes. Frame up family photos like graduation, travels, family events, to remind care recipients of the people who matter the most.

**01 GURLI cushion** Select contrasting colours for cushions to make the couch more inviting.

**02 RIBBA frames** Bold, thick photo frames highlight the photos in them as a constant reminder of family and friends.

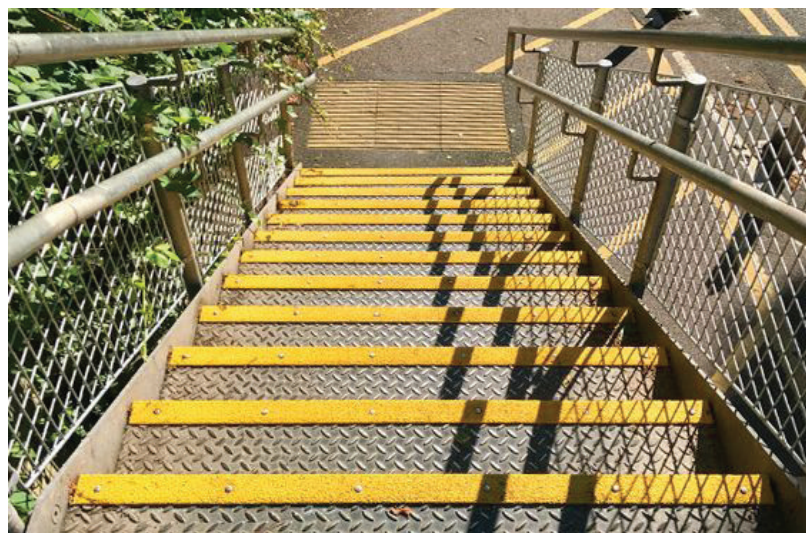
**03 HEKTAR floor lamp** Use a lamp to illuminate and draw attention to essential items or an important part of the room.

**04 BURVIK red table** A table in a bright contrasting colour accentuates the items on it.

**05 MELODI pendant lamp** Keep corridors and walkways brightly lit.

**06 Marked door** A highlighted doorway marks out frequently visited rooms.

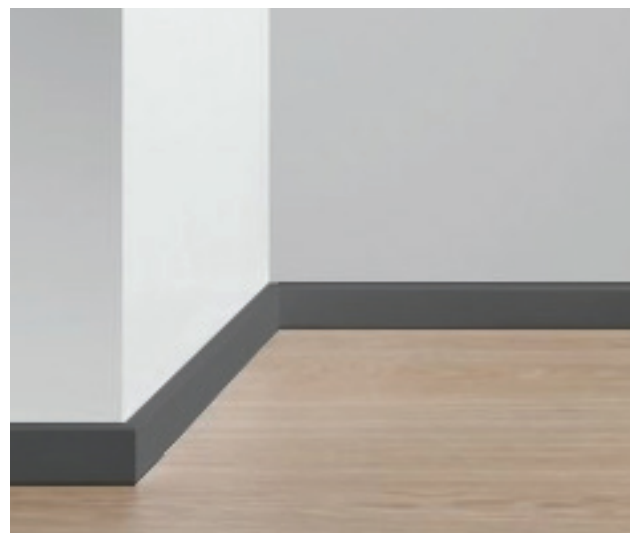




Make the stair safer by highlighting step edges with a bright, high-contrast colour. The grip improves if these edge nosings are in a non-slip material.

## Read the contrast, tread safely

When floors and walls look similar, navigating the home becomes confusing. Highlight doorways or steps with accented colours to help them find their way. Avoid patterned or textured flooring as they can cause confusion.



Have a contrasting colour for the floor skirting so that care recipients can distinguish between the walls and floors. This avoids confusion, especially if the floors and walls are in similar colour tones.



Mark out frequently used rooms by accentuating the door or frame colour.





# Invite interaction with contrast



Coloured handles and knobs stand out more.



Accent your sofas with bright-coloured cushions for a bright, uplifting environment.  
**GURLI yellow cushion** From IKEA.

Research shows that eating from blue-coloured plates increases food intake.

**KALAS cutlery set** From IKEA.



A glass of water on a bright red tray table can be a subtle cue to hydrate oneself regularly.

**BURVIK red table** From IKEA.

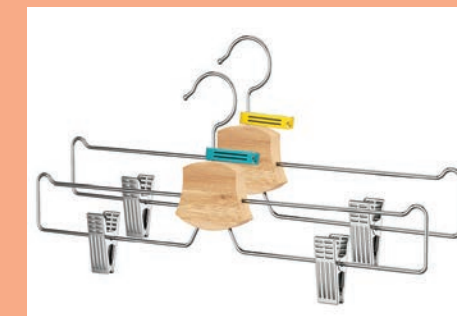


Red is an easy colour to recognise for older persons with impaired vision.



Switches that blend in with the wall can be easy to miss. Contrasting colours make them more noticeable.

## TOOLS FOR COLOUR MARKING



### Colour your world!

Stickers, paint, coloured hooks and clips — the possibilities for using colour to enliven the home are endless. Use favourite colours to personalise spaces and objects. This makes the home environment come alive.





**SALTHOLMEN**  
folding table and chairs

**\$199**

01

### Prevent wandering into potentially dangerous areas

Visually (and physically) block exits by placing cosy furniture in front of them, inviting them to rest.

# Visual cues to curb wandering

Persons with dementia may wander beyond the home unnoticed. They may also insist on leaving home in certain moments of confusion. Here are some ways to curb these tendencies by altering the visual environment.



02

### Curb wandering

A black mat can sometimes be perceived as a hole in the ground. Certain care homes place such mats at exit doors as a safety feature to discourage wandering. However, doing so presents an ethical dilemma as it may incite fear. Consider the appropriateness of this safety measure before employing it.

**YDBY black door mat** FROM IKEA.

03

### Camouflage exit doors

Conceal the exit door by painting it in a colour similar to the adjacent walls. This prevents care recipients from leaving home unsupervised.





Have a continuous chain of handles along the way from the bed to the toilet - just like a string of pearls. This ensures that physical support is available whenever it's needed.

**01 OMTÄNKSAM red grab bar** Bright colours make the grab bar fun and enticing.

**02 SATSUMAS plant stand** How about a wall-mounted ladder frame as both a plant stand and a grab bar? It's suitable for squatting exercises too.

**03 LOSJÖN coloured hooks** These versatile hooks are more than hangers for photo frames. They also double as grab handles.

**04 KALLAX shelving unit** Select bedside tables that are around 80cm high. They also function as useful lean supports when one stands up.

**05 ÖSTERNÄS leather handle** These tactile add-ons make the table look cute — and also serve a practical purpose.

01



Handles and bars should be secured at a height of 75 to 80cm from the floor.

02

03

04

05

## Lean on me, when you're not strong

Older-aged persons are occasionally prideful and resist using walking aids or safety handrails. Disguise handlebars as attractive fixtures for everyday furniture and wall decorations. Turn walls and surfaces into tactile interfaces that one can hold and accent them with attractive, visually contrasting colours.





Keep chemicals like detergents in nondescript, camouflaged containers so that care recipients do not notice them.

**01 ENUDDEN white dispenser** FROM IKEA.

Remove unnecessary distractions to simplify choices. Clarify the visual environment with camouflage — by choosing the same colour for doors and objects as the walls behind. Cover unused buttons on the TV remote control to simplify its use. Environments and interfaces that are easy to understand are enabling, especially for persons with dementia.

**02 VIVAN white curtain** If painting the door is not possible, drape a curtain of similar colour to the wall over the opening to conceal the clutter behind.



## Lowlight to reduce visual clutter

## A DRAPE TO SIMPLIFY



**VIVAN**  
curtain **02**

**\$19.90**





**FICUS ELASTICA**  
house plant

**\$15.90**

**Houseplants improve air quality**

Research shows that houseplants can reduce indoor air pollutants by as much as 85%. NASA recommends 15 to 18 houseplants for an 1800 square feet home.

**FICUS ELASTICA** From IKEA



Let plants be a part of everyday life. Place them where they can be encountered daily up-close, like the bedside table.



## Plants lift us up where we belong

Not only do they make the home cosy and pleasurable, they are also functional. Care recipients can use plants as visual landmarks to safely navigate the home environment. They also improve indoor air quality by removing harmful pollutants.



# FAMILIARITY ENABLES.

See VOICES chapter for what the doctor says on the benefits of familiarity.

That same coffee tin

That same kopi mug

That same kopitiam chair







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# TIME & LIGHT

Our body is attuned to the progression of time, taking its temporal cue from the sunlight's variation across the day. This influences our 'biological clock' that sends appropriate signals for mealtime, activity and rest. This chapter explores ways to work with this body clock.



# The “Dusk Crisis”

## CHALLENGES OF A SETTING SUN



Careers know the late afternoon as a time of unique challenges—and for many people living with dementia, a moment of acute discomfort. The term “sundown syndrome,” or “sundowning,” refers to this common phenomenon: when day turns to evening, exhaustion and lack of clarity in the time-sequence of the day can be unusually upsetting for those with various degrees of cognitive impairment. It is a phenomenon that has been oft-identified through clinical observation—including recent psychiatric investigation by the National Institute of Health in the United States (NIH).<sup>1</sup> It is associated with symptoms “such as agitation, confusion, anxiety, and aggressiveness in late afternoon, in the evening, or at night.” Ironically, the time that traditionally has been called “golden hour” can, for many of us, be the darkest.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3246134/>

Although sundowning is not officially recognised as a psychiatric diagnosis—it is not in the DSM-IV-TR (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)—medical practitioners are well aware that it can cause unhappy effects. It has, for example, been a frequent cause of institutionalisation. Not least, it has often been associated with severe symptomatic expressions, such as visual and auditory hallucinations.

*“Confusion as to the time of day can lead to sensations of panic; at dusk, time can seem especially ambiguous, and the darkness unsettling.”*

Sundown Syndrome might seem a fact of life, as inevitable as the passage from day to night. But are there design hacks that might bring a measure of relief?



It's tough. Late afternoon can be stressful for multiple reasons—and this is part of what makes these hours particularly trying. Nearly everyone, of all walks of life, is familiar with the sense of tiredness or irritability that sets in after a long day of stresses. This is a moment when the accumulated efforts of the many previous hours can take their toll. And especially for those with unusual burdens of stress!

As noted by the NIH study, sundowning can often appear as a merely exaggerated version of what many experience as, simply, the end of the day. Where cognitively-typical people can recognise and account for this, however, it is not so easy when some degree of impairment is present. In fact, quite the opposite: dusk hours are associated with *increased* impairment, which in turn reduces the ability to identify our daily rhythm as a cause.

### *A first approach is to introduce hacks to our living spaces that re-emphasise the time or rhythm of the day.*

Put more simply: this is a time associated with a lot of background noise. Likewise, the hormonal fluctuations of our diurnal cycle play a contributing role. The late afternoon is exhausting, in part, because the body's cortisol is waning—leading to an increased sense of tiredness and diminished emotional equanimity.<sup>2</sup> This is, in part, why our human cultures associate rage or insecurity (or plain sadness) with the end of the day. As the poet Dylan Thomas famously urged, “do not go gentle into that good night, old age should burn and rave at close of day”!

Certainly, however, dementia contributes a number

of its own factors to sundown syndrome. Confusion as to the time of day can lead to sensations of panic; at dusk, time can seem especially ambiguous, and the darkness unsettling. Mild to moderate dementia, in particular, can express in an increasing loss of sense of time, particularly in institutional environments—or more generally in settings where persons are not cognitively stimulated or challenged. Likewise, this can be a problem when daily routines of going out and returning home are no longer applicable. The passage of time is, for most of us, marked by the sequence of our activities. At the same time, reduced light and visibility can lead to heightened incidence of misrecognition, to the point of hallucination and panic.

So how might we (as Dylan Thomas put it) “rage against the dying of the light?”

A first approach is to introduce hacks to our living spaces that re-emphasise the time or rhythm of the day. We might distribute more clocks—a cheap and easy method for making time more visible (at least for those with milder experiences of dementia). Clocks can be positioned to sit



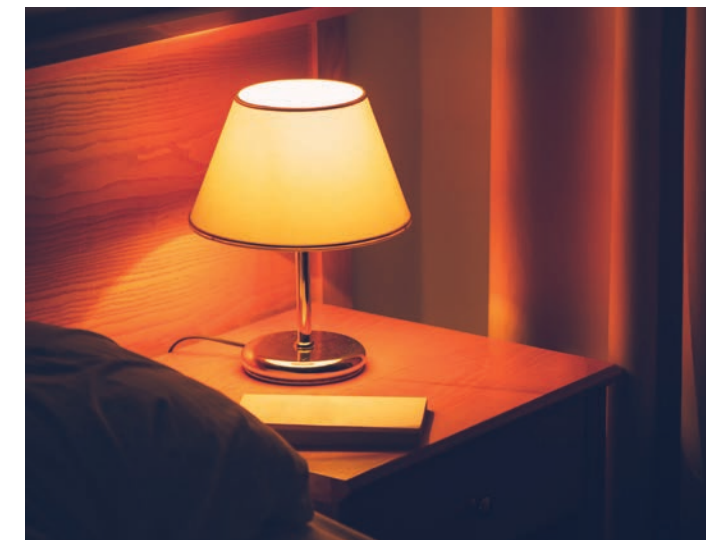
2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3475279/>

### *Lamps might help to prevent our spaces from lingering for too long in the gloomy light of dusk*

within the eyeline of favourite chairs, activity areas, or seating clusters. A simple nail or screw drilled at multiple locations in a flat could allow clocks to be moved as needed to a variety of positions.

In other cases, a daily rhythm can be reinforced using other indicators. A regular regime of turning lights on at a consistent hour, or a visible change to the environment such as drawing of blinds or curtains that underscore (and accelerate) the transition from day to night—minimizing the “gloaming” effect of transitory lighting. Pre-verbal indicators such as smells also hold promise for reinforcing time sequence: for example, the scent of cooking or of coffee at regular intervals. Research has shown that odours “speak” to areas of the brain that are independent from the frontal cortex, and may be unconsciously registered.

Another tip is to pay renewed attention to the day and evening lighting of our living spaces. Many in high-rise apartments live with light predominantly from one side—the one at the building's external façade. Such singular, powerful



sources of illumination raise the potential hazard of glare, silhouetting, and other effects that can be disorienting or uncomfortable. We may wish to add extra light fixtures toward the “inside” areas of our flats, redistributing the light to make sure that our environments are balanced and offsetting glare from windows. Lamps might help to prevent our spaces from lingering for too long in the gloomy light of dusk, and help to make a noticeable event of lighting the room for the evening to begin.

These changes need not be onerous. Use of a set schedule helps to simplify the routine, and timer switches are available from most hardware outlets—allowing us to automate, even, the turning on and off of light sources.

While sundown syndrome may be unavoidable—for all humans—we are lucky to now have a certain control over the lighting of our lives. We can use this power to ease the transitions, and hopefully illuminate the gloom of that difficult time of day.



Reinforcing our natural rhythm of the day is helpful for everyone in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Read on for more tips and tricks!



# Rhythm of the day

The circadian rhythm in our bodies regulates our sleep-wake cycle. It responds to the sunlight as the day progresses from light to dark. By pairing and sequencing activities in sync with the daylight cycle, we reinforce this natural rhythm. This improves sleep quality and also enhances daytime wellness.

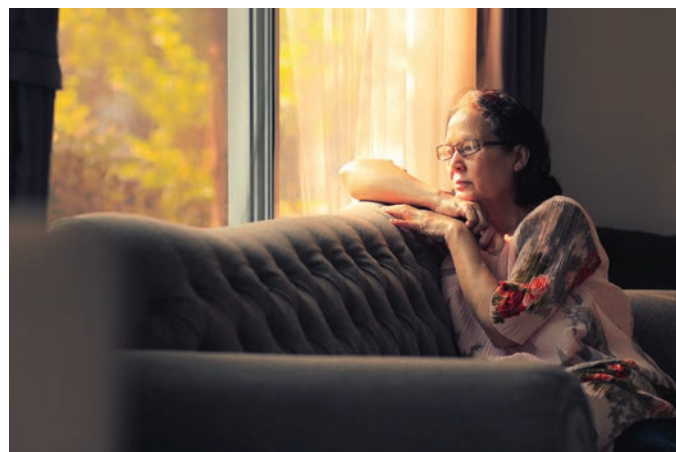
## 1 Wake up

Wake up at first light. It ensures more energy for the rest of the day.



## 2 Mealtimes

Lunch signals mid-day and should take place in day-lit spaces where the sun's presence is perceptible.



## 3 Wind down for sleep

Prepare for bedtime through a gradual wind-down process. Dim the lights 2 hours before bedtime. Quiet rituals help the process.



## 4 Daytime Activities

Sunlight exposure reinforces care recipients' circadian rhythm and improves their sleep.



# A daily dose of sunlight

30 minutes of daily sunlight exposure allows the body to differentiate day from night. Engage in outdoor activities like walks around the neighbourhood. They lead to better sleep at night.

Participating in heritage walks is a good way to get out of the house while triggering and reinforcing past memories.



**REMINISCENCE WALK**  
Guided heritage walks for seniors.

By the National Heritage Board (NHB)  
and Sage Counselling Centre

Try checking out a new park every month to keep the relationship fresh and exciting. This creates new memories too.



Sit them by a bright window in the morning if they cannot leave home. If there are no windows, try using light therapy lamps instead.

# I'M WALKING ON SUNSHINE



**These shoes are made for walking.**

Good shoes walk a long way. Ensure that these are comfortable, durable and have a good grip to prevent falls.

**Walking shoes** From Lazada.



# Dawn to dusk

Where possible, match the interior spaces to outdoor light conditions. For dim spaces, use artificial lights to mimic outdoor brightness — brighter lights at mid-day, warm lights at sunset, and soft lights in the evening.

## NATURAL LIGHT

7 AM

10 AM

1 PM

3 PM

## ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

- 01 ÖSTANÄ wall lamp** Additional wall lightings help to brighten up the house, making it visually accessible.
- 02 NOT floor lamp** Avoid sundowning by having floor lamps in dark corners.
- 03 NYFORS table lamp** Wind down and relax with a soft, warm night lamp.



Lampshades provide soft ambient lighting, creating a visually relaxing environment. This helps with winding down for bedtime.

03

9 PM

7 PM



### 01 Maintain even and soft lighting in the evening.

Mimic the evening sun with warm lights that are visually relaxing. This prepares everyone for bedtime.

**TRÅDFRI dimming kit** FROM IKEA.



## Are you afraid of the dark?

At dusk, waning light and increasing shadows can cause confusion and anxiety. This condition is known as "sundowning" or "late-day confusion", which can trigger fear and aggression. We suggest ways to mitigate its worst effects.

### 02 Set timers for lights.

Timers help to ensure that rooms will never be dark, even after the sun sets.



### 03 Install motion sensors for night wandering.

When care recipients wander into dark rooms, motion sensors can turn lights on to create a safe, illuminated space.

**TRÅDFRI motion sensor** FROM IKEA.



### 04 Curtains or blinds to diffuse shadows.

Shadows can be long and dark at sunset. Use curtains or blinds to diffuse the shadows. Be sure to turn on the indoor lights at the same time.



### 05 Hold the person's hand or sit close by.

Comfort them with soothing voices. Give them the assurance of touch by holding their hands.



### 06 Play soothing music.

Let them relax to their favourite tunes. Familiar music can calm them and reduce agitation.

**ENEBY bluetooth speaker** FROM IKEA.

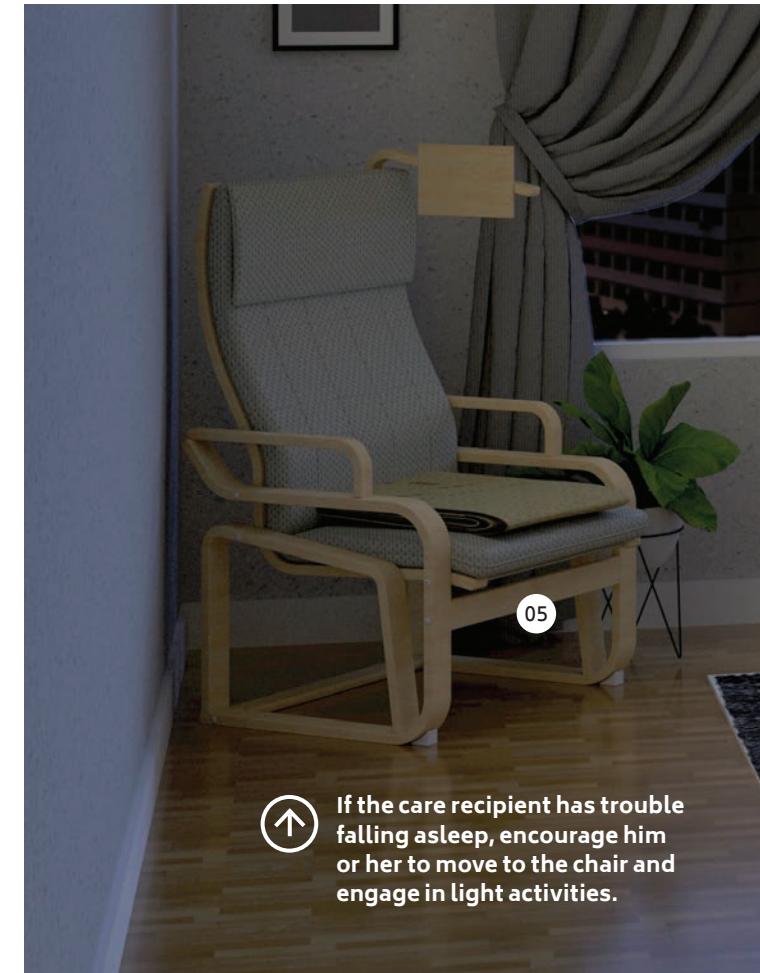




Avoid having a television in the bedroom as it may be overly stimulating. Instead, enjoy the view outside the window before turning in.



If the lamps are motion-activated, ensure that they turn on gradually so as to not shock and scare with sudden illumination.



If the care recipient has trouble falling asleep, encourage him or her to move to the chair and engage in light activities.



## No more counting sheep to sleep

The bedroom environment influences sleep quality. Avoid clutter and keep the space free of distractions like the television. An armchair for them to rest before bedtime reserves the bed just for sleep — this reinforces the association between them. A cooler temperature encourages deeper slumber.

**01 TRÅDFRI motion sensor** Motion-activated night lamps make the environment safer, even when the carer is not present.

**02 Table clock** Simple bedside clocks are helpful for telling the time.

**03 RIBBA photo frame** Personalise the bedroom with photographs and familiar items, but be sure to keep the space tidy and free of clutter.

**04 TERESIA curtains** Use curtains to diffuse long and harsh morning or evening shadows. This minimises confusion triggered by changing sunlight.

**05 HACKED POÄNG arm chair** The armchair is useful place to rest, especially when it is not yet time for bed. Use the bed only for sleeping.



# Build a better bedtime

A good night's sleep elevates mood and improves mental ability. Here are some tips to fall asleep quickly and slumber deeply.



## 01 Wear comfy pajamas to bed.

Changing into sleepwear is a way to prepare for bedtime. It signals the body to relax and unwind.

**Soft Stretch Pajamas** FROM UNIQLO.

02

## Stick to a consistent sleep-wake schedule.

Go to bed and wake up at a fixed time each day. This helps to reinforce the body clock.

**TRÅDFRI smart light system** FROM IKEA.



03

## No physical activities past 5pm.

Limit physical exercises to daytime. Avoid strenuous activity in the 2 to 3 hours before bedtime. This helps to prepare the body for rest.



04

## Unwind slowly before bedtime.

Take time to relax before bedtime. A relaxing shower or bath could help to ease the body into slumber.

**ROCKÅN bath robe** FROM IKEA.



05

## No naps past 3pm.

Avoid taking naps late in the afternoon. Doing so makes it harder to fall asleep later in the evening.



# FANCY A NIGHTCAP?



Eating and drinking habits can affect sleep quality. Here are some suggestions for a good night's rest:

1. Avoid late dinners. They come too close to bedtime and interfere with sleep.
2. Always opt for a light dinner over a heavy meal. It makes digestion easier.
3. Consume less carbohydrates and sugar after 5pm.
4. Avoid caffeine or alcohol.
5. Replace your nightcap with a glass of milk. It contains melatonin, which encourages deeper sleep.
6. Drink teas like chamomile or lavender. They soothe the nerves.





## Tell time with scents

It is easy for persons with dementia to lose track of time. Scents and aromas are a sensory way to acquaint one with the time of the day — they can even elevate moods. How about a whiff of freshly brewed coffee to perk up their mornings, or a savoury aroma to coax a hearty appetite? In the evening, try some soothing essential oils to create a relaxed environment before bedtime.



## SMELL YOU LATER

**Olfactory stimulation as cognitive stimuli.**  
Diffuse their favourite scent around the room to trigger joy and delight.  
**Aroma diffuser** From various lifestyle shops.



# HOUSE OF HUES

The colour of our surroundings can affect our mood. Colour your world accordingly. Rather than painting the walls, hack your lamps by colouring the lampshades. Changing the atmosphere of the room, and your mood – it's that easy!



Get creative with lampshades. Use coloured cellophane to change the light colour. It's also reminiscent of their good ol' disco days.





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# VOICES

We feature diverse perspectives — part professional advice, part heart felt voices — on what it means to care for a person with dementia. When the going gets tough for the carer, we can always tap on the collective wisdom of others to find support and learn from each other. We hope to inspire caregivers to soldier on together as a community.





# *There is no fixed template for caring*

**RUTH WONG, ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE ASSOCIATION (ADA)**

**C**ould you describe the work that you do with families caring for a person with dementia?

I run a project for the Alzheimer's Disease Association (ADA) called "Memories Café." Every Saturday, we would invite persons with dementia and their families to come and interact in cafes operated by our partners. We

adopted this idea from the Netherlands where it was called "Alzheimer's Café." For the first hour, the persons with dementia would collaborate with artists in live performances — singing, dancing, drumming and the like. For the second hour, they would engage in an activity that suits them. They may simply be chilling out or enjoying themselves.

I also run a programme called

"Voices for Hope" that empowers caregivers and persons with dementia to be self-advocates. It is an 8- to 10-week programme where they explain what it means to care for persons with dementia on different community platforms. I'm currently on my fourth cohort of participants. Last November, we led the first cohort on a study trip to Taiwan to meet their counterparts there.

**How did you come to do this work related to dementia?**

My background is actually in early childhood education. I also lived with my grandmother for 9 years and became curious about ageing — how people get old and how to live well in old age. I later took a part-time degree course in Gerontology and eventually completed the degree in Canada where I did an internship in a dementia-care setting. I somehow grew to like working with persons with dementia and my supervisors there were also supportive. After returning to Singapore, I worked with the Tsao Foundation on elder-related programmes before running "Memories Café" for the ADA.

**What did you learn in the process of doing this work?**

It really shook my concept of ageing. We often stigmatise this process and assume that growing old means becoming useless or helpless. Actually, you can age very successfully and enjoy growing old.

Dementia differs from general ageing in that it involves memory loss. Just because persons with dementia have lost their memory does not mean that they have lost everything. They retain many abilities that they can still contribute and can live very well if their

condition is properly managed. They can still respond with humour. They can still be a grandma, a parent, a good spouse, and love their family.

I am struck by their positivity. Of course some of them may be negative but it's just a phase — if they can acknowledge the condition and walk through that, they can live very well. Persons with dementia can maintain their independence, make decisions and express themselves like anyone of us. That humanity, to me, is very special.

***"Persons with dementia can maintain their independence, make decisions and express themselves like anyone of us."***



**For families who are new to caring for a loved one with dementia, what should they pay attention to?**

Every family is different and there is no set way to care for a person with dementia. It depends on the relationship and who the primary caregiver is. If it's a spouse, for example, the care would come about differently from that given by adult children. The common theme is the love that they have for each other. Caregivers sometimes acknowledge that their role now is to care — with commitment, perseverance and a sense of purpose.

People often assume that caring for a person with dementia is burdensome but caregivers sometimes reply otherwise. They say, "I also received a lot from them. I learned new things, like how to respond creatively to unexpected behavior." For them, caregiving is an experience of learning and growing together. When a caregiver says that it means that they are enlightened — they have walked through it and see caregiving as a journey.

**Are there any misconceptions around caregiving?**

Many people talk about caregiving (i.e. "I give care" or "I care *for* you") in a way that reinforces the disability of





*“They can still be a grandma, a parent, a good spouse, and love their family.”*

the person being cared for. However, the persons with dementia still want to exercise their autonomy. They do not like to burden people and still desire the dignity of doing things on their own.

We should re-focus towards the concept of a care partner (i.e. “I partner with you for your care”) where I come in on your invitation and we share power in a co-created caring situation. This can work regardless whether the primary caregiver is the spouse or adult children. It should be about empowering persons with dementia to live the way that they want to.

**What differentiates the families that cope better with the caregiving process?**

The first thing is to accept that dementia has come into the family. Both the caregiver and the person with dementia have to acknowledge this. If you do not do so, it becomes a constant fight and this makes caregiving very difficult. The caregiver should also accept that this person now lives with dementia and their relationship with the care recipient will transform.

Some families take a long time to accept while others do so quickly and life carries on. Because each family’s dynamics are different, the care will show up differently in different families. With that in mind, each family’s decision

on how best to care for their loved one needs to be respected. It’s not about good or bad but which phase of the caring journey — and which phase of dementia — they are in.

**You mentioned that persons with dementia can still live very well if their conditions are properly managed. What are some ways to manage and intervene?**

One, routine is very important. You can set up a routine for their daily activities — especially for persons with early stage dementia. Even ordinary people’s lives revolve around rituals like breakfast and lunch. This helps to explain why persons with dementia cope really well with day-care — because it offers a specific routine.

If the person with dementia is “free-flowing” and dislikes routines, it then becomes a question of how you meet their needs with sensitivity. Do you totally take over, guide step-by-step, or just gently coax the care recipient to do something? There is no fixed template and each caregiver does it differently.

One aspect to intervening well is to maintain a sense of readiness and match the pace of the person with dementia. For example, you can establish eye contact, call them by their name, and

then gradually ease into a conversation or request. Of course, one must know the person first and it depends on their stage of dementia. Sometimes you may need to slow your speech and wait for a cue of readiness.

There is no fixed template to caring and each caregiver does it differently. It really depends on the relationship or even how one is feeling at a given moment. Nevertheless, it should always be about providing care in a respectful way. For persons with dementia, their emotion is the last thing to go so it’s about how caregivers make that emotional connection. If the person with dementia feels at ease, it is probably right.



**Can persons with dementia do things for themselves?**

Most definitely. For those in the early stage, they can do pretty much everything on their own. It becomes tougher for those in the moderate or advanced stage, depending on which part of the brain is affected. If the parts that determine mobility or continence are not affected, they can still perform certain tasks. I have seen moderate-stage persons with dementia do things independently.

*“If the person with dementia feels at ease, it is probably right.”*

**You recently led some self-advocates on a study trip to Taiwan. What were some highlights from this trip?**

This was a trip organised by ADA to bring six families caring for a person with dementia to Taiwan to meet their counterparts. The objective was to learn from the self-advocacy group in Taipei and also to let them have a good time — to prove that persons with dementia can enjoy travel like any one of us.

There were many beautiful moments during that trip. I was very moved by how persons with dementia look out for each other. For example, we were crossing the street on our way to the night market with two gentlemen — Steven and George. Steven is still in the early stage of dementia and George is very young — he’s only 48. Steven walks slowly due to a kneecap problem. Whenever George walks along the sidewalk, he would look back and ask, “Steven, are you ok?” and Steven would reply with humour, “You mean you want to carry me if I’m not ok?”

These persons with dementia use humour to express their familiarity and care for each other. They accept each person for who they are and cultivate close bonds. It is amazing to see how they call each other by their first names, recognise familiar faces, and feel this sense of belonging as a community. I think that makes it special for them.





### Does a caregiver's mental state affect the quality of care given to the person with dementia?

If the caregiver is calm and at peace, you will notice that the person they care for is okay. There is a concept in early childhood education called “Transfer Anxiety” that probably applies here. If the mother is anxious, the baby will cry once she carries the baby. This is because young children are very sensitive to their parents’ emotions, and so the anxiety transfers from mother to child.

Similarly, persons with dementia are sensitive to their caregivers’ emotions. If you are tense, they sense it from your body language and start to feel anxious. This is because you are now the most important person in their life. It really helps if caregivers are aware of their own emotions. They should take a break first if they think that now is not the right time to approach the care recipient. In that way, they do not “transfer” their anxiety to the care recipient.

### Why should caregivers look after their own needs?

As a caregiver, whatever you do affects the person you are caring for — like a mother caring for her child. Therefore, it always works very well when caregivers are aware of their own limits and can say, “No, I need my self-care first.” You have to feel ready to give care. This only happens when you are calm and not exhausted. It helps for carers to have this awareness.

You can tell that the person with dementia knows. They will learn to wait if the caregiver finds a way to communicate with them. Of course you may have to pace it. There may be times when you have to set aside your momentary needs to serve the care recipient first. You just need to be aware of what will work best. It will always be a trade-off and a balance.



We advise caregivers to always set aside time for themselves and not be the only person caring for their loved ones. Let go and let others come in to care. That “me-time” is important. Caregivers find it hard to let go because they see it as their responsibility. They fear that they are troubling someone or something unforeseen might happen. Those are the carer’s stress.

I feel that they need to trust the person with dementia — that they are adults and have lived their lives for many years. They know and can tell us if they need anything.

***“If you are tense, they sense it from your body language and start to feel anxious. This is because you are now the most important person in their life.”***

### What is your dream invention to make life easier for caregivers or persons with dementia?

A robot that knows everything about the person with dementia — his or her needs, wants, hopes, and even memories. That makes it so much easier for the caregiver. Persons with dementia have brains that are deteriorating. There may come a point when they can no longer express themselves or even recognise you. It becomes tough to anticipate needs unless the caregiver knows this person intimately and thoroughly.

With the onset of dementia, the loss of memory and life experience is very painful because this makes us unique and gives us our identity. The memory of our lived experiences coloured with emotions makes us special. This is why persons with dementia get very scared of losing their memory, especially in the early stages when they are still aware. This is a type of fear that can make you feel helpless, like being a kid that does not know how to find his way outside.

Imagine if this robot can store these memories and put it into the brain of the person with dementia — how nice would that be?

***“You can age very successfully and enjoy growing old. ”***



### Ruth's Recommendations



***“There is no template, so just grow with it because that’s all you can do.”***

#### Do you have any final advice for families embarking on this caregiving journey?

Just be yourself. Be who you are and do what you can. Knowing who you are is important. As the journey progresses, you will learn and your abilities will grow, and there will be more tricks in your bag that you can use. There is no template, so just grow with it because that’s all you can do. Don’t forget to love yourself.

Visit [www.alz.org.sg](http://www.alz.org.sg) to find out more about the various support services of ADA.

1. There is no correct or fixed template to care for a person with dementia. It is different for every person, relationship and family.
2. Having a routine is important. Organise the day around mealtimes and activities.
3. Match the pace of the care recipient. Make eye contact, call them by their name and ease them into a conversation.





## Caring for someone with dementia isn't easy

Living with a person with dementia exerts a huge toll. It requires immense patience, time and understanding. Do not feel guilty for taking time off whenever you need a break. Go easy on yourself.

## ME-TIME MAKES FOR BETTER WE-TIME



KIVIK  
chaise lounge

\$395

### Be kind to yourself.

Allow yourself regular breaks while taking care of your loved ones. Go for a walk in the park, indulge in self-care rituals, or simply steal a nap when you're tired.

KIVIK chaise lounge From IKEA



# *If you don't use it, you'll lose it.*

**DR WONG CHEK HOOI,**

SENIOR CONSULTANT, DEPARTMENT OF GERIATRIC MEDICINE, KHOO TECK PUAT HOSPITAL  
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GERIATRIC EDUCATION AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE

## **W**hat happens when a person has dementia?

It depends on the severity of the dementia when it is diagnosed. Everyone knows that dementia relates to memory and forgetfulness, but we forget that it covers more than that. It also involves how they perceive spaces and the way things are arranged. This explains why persons with dementia can get confused and lost. It may even reach a point where they cannot do basic activities like putting on their clothes. Because dementia involves spatial perception and how people see things, I see a role for design of the physical environment to help persons with dementia cope with everyday living.

## **How does dementia differ from cognitive impairment?**

Cognitive impairment is an all-encompassing term of which dementia is a subset. To give a non-dementia example, a person who is depressed may have problems processing memory, people or the environment. We can say that this person has cognitive impairment, but he may not have dementia. Cognitive impairment is a larger term than encompasses dementia — which is a specific, clinical diagnosis.

## **Are there different types of dementia?**

Two main types of dementia form the majority of cases. The first is the Alzheimer's type, which is mainly a degenerative process in the brain. The second is the vascular type, which is due to pre-existing conditions like high-blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol. Other types of dementia also exist but they are generally less common.

*“I see a role for design of the physical environment to help persons with dementia cope with everyday living.”*



## **At what stage are dementia cases commonly diagnosed?**

Most patients are unfortunately diagnosed at the late stage. This is because memory impairment or changes in environmental perception are mistakenly perceived as signs of normal ageing. We therefore end up diagnosing them at a later stage.

## **What should a family pay attention to when a loved one gets diagnosed with dementia?**

Firstly, they should understand that this is memory impairment that is not normal with ageing. A normal ageing person has some impairment but it doesn't affect how he or she functions. Dementia is very specific. It affects how the person functions — like the way they interact and cope with the environment. Family members need to identify it and seek help.

Secondly, we should establish the diagnosis. We seldom diagnose dementia quickly because cognitive impairment has many causes. This is important as cognitive impairment caused by something like depression can be reversed. However, dementia is irreversible and we know its progression once we give the diagnosis. They will get progressively forgetful, with all the



problems associated with memory and their perception of the environment. This will affect how they function.

### **If dementia is irreversible, what are appropriate health and wellness goals for a person with dementia?**

The progression of dementia can be slowed down. There are different interventions to slow progressive loss in memory and function. We encourage persons with dementia to stay physically active. There must also be mental stimulation — it could be crossword puzzles or sudoku. It goes back to the old saying, “If you do not use it, you will lose it.”

It is important to slow down the progression of dementia so that the person can still have a very good, independent quality of life. Both physical and mental activity are good. Lifestyle changes also help — like not smoking, or adopting diet changes that prevent diabetes, high blood pressure or high cholesterol. These are things that people can do.

We sometimes give medication to prevent quick deterioration in the mental function of a person with dementia.

### **Does diet play a role in the health and well-being of persons with dementia?**

The risk factors for vascular dementia — one of the 2 common types of dementia — are similar that for diabetes and hypertension. Foods that pre-dispose a person to these conditions also pre-dispose one to dementia. Therefore, it is good to avoid foods that are too sweet, fatty, or have high salt content.

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***“We encourage persons with dementia to stay physically active.”***



There is some belief that green tea and other tea substances may help dementia. It's still under study but if you enjoy green tea, please continue to drink it. There are other things like ginkgo and vitamin E but the evidence for consuming more of it is not robust. I will still recommend foods that prevent diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol.

### **Does the physical environment affect persons with dementia?**

Definitely. Whether it's indoors or outdoors, the environment can enable or disable someone from engaging in physical activity. Beyond just performing



the activity, it is important for persons with dementia to participate in more engaged ways. An environment that is enabling allows a person with dementia to still go out to do their various activities. Design can help to overcome these disabling environments.

### **How does a familiar environment help a person with dementia?**

Usually, for a person with early-stage dementia, home is the least confusing environment because of its familiarity. With ageing, we tend to not want to use too many of our brain cells. We are “cognitive misers” in that sense. In other words, we choose to do familiar things because it needs very little thinking, and

is almost automatic.

For example, when you return home you'll likely place your watch and wallet in a particular place. If you forget to place these items in the same location, it becomes hard to find them. It's the same thing with dementia. They just have a lower threshold so it is harder for them if they are not familiar with it.

This does not mean that they cannot deal with new environments. The new environments need to enable them to move around and perceive things more easily. For example, in a room where everything is white — the walls, the furniture, carpets, etc — a person with dementia would probably just see a flat white surface.

Even if an environment is beautifully designed, a person with dementia who cannot process these inputs will have difficulty understanding this space. It makes them even more fearful because you need to understand an environment to be less fearful of it.

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***“We should ensure safety without being too over-protective.”***

### **In that case, are there benefits to exposing persons with dementia to new and unfamiliar environments?**

It is actually helpful for those with early stage dementia. Mental stimulation is helpful for a person with dementia. It may take a longer time and you may need to introduce something that is mixed — a little bit familiar and a little bit new. Mixing the familiar and unfamiliar will challenge them, but does not set the bar so high that it prevents them from trying. So one to initiate and the other one to continue.

### **As dementia fully progresses, are persons with dementia still capable of emotions?**

Definitely. Emotions are not hindered by dementia, only processing is. In fact,



emotions can be heightened, depending on whether or not we understand a given situation. Some of my patients with dementia exhibit heightened behaviour like fear or shouting when they feel confused in a given setting or situation.

Responding to someone with heightened behaviour involves empathy. We have to modulate their social environment, understand what provokes them and remove the stimulus. We should avoid provoking them as it could increase their anxiety level, causing them to respond negatively.



### Are persons with dementia able to do things on their own?

Definitely. It depends on the severity of their dementia. For those in the early and moderate stages of dementia, they will still be able to do a lot of their activities. In fact, we encourage them to do things independently because you get stimulation from those activities.

People with mild dementia can even function in the community. I have mild dementia patients who still go to the coffee shop because they want to interact socially. They still want to buy their

*kopi* from somewhere familiar. Having dementia does not mean that they have to stay at home and cannot go out.

However, as their dementia progresses, they may get lost in a new environment. This means that the community has to enable — and look out for — these persons. Someone can say, “Hey you are lost. Let me take you to a spot where we can call your loved ones.” So long as the social and physical environment is enabling, these persons can still function in the community.

*“They still want to buy their kopi from somewhere familiar.”*

**Do you have a “hack” — or smart ideas — to care for someone in the home environment?**

It would be a good idea if we had a “walk in my shoes” session for designers or potential carers to better understand what a person with dementia experiences — in terms of visual, audio, spatial, tactile, or emotional sensations. It would help us understand people from other perspectives.

My wish is for a designer to understand and empathise with an older person with cognitive impairment to be able to better design for them. The best outcome is if a design can cater to both aesthetics and function — which requires us to consider their needs.

**What would be a dream invention or device to care for someone with dementia?**

Instead of the care recipient, I would think about the caregiver who is not cared for that well. I hope there is a device that reminds caregivers of their own stress level because they need to keep themselves emotionally, mentally and physically well to care for someone.

**What final advice do you have for someone caring for a loved one with dementia?**

My first advice for caregivers is to be kind to yourself. It’s very tough. Everyone is human and I think caregivers need to accept that what they are doing in caregiving is not an easy job. They shouldn’t blame themselves when the person they are caring for eventually deteriorates and cannot perform simple tasks. It’s part and parcel of the process.

My second advice is — it’s tough



to be enabling and protective at the same time but we have to be both. I understand that the carer may feel bad if something bad (e.g. a fall ) happens to the care recipient while pursuing an independent activity. We should ensure safety without being too over-protective. It’s about finding that balance.

My third advice is that people in Singapore read up a lot, but they should always discuss it with their doctor and other caregivers. Other caregivers have a life experience and it’s good to learn from their trials and tribulations. It is not just the physical act of caring that is challenging but also the emotional part.

## Doctor’s Advice



1. Always discuss with your doctor and other caregivers.
2. Find the balance between being enabling and protective.
3. Caregivers, be kind to yourselves.



# Mindfulness in Dementia Care

**ERIC LIM, BRAHM CENTRE**  
PSYCHOLOGIST

**C**an you describe the work that you do with persons with dementia and their families?

I have been a Mindfulness Trainer with the Brahm Centre over the past five years. We conduct mindfulness classes to help people understand the habits of the mind and bring more awareness to themselves.

Caregivers often get stressed by negative thoughts about what the future may hold for their loved ones. Our 4-week mindfulness foundation course acquaints participants with the triggers that cause them to just “lose it.” Stress causes the body to react — whether it is the shoulders getting tense or the heart rate increasing. When one is aware of these bodily signs of stress, he or she can respond appropriately.

Many participants have reflected that the mindfulness course helped them improve their relationship with the care recipient. While they cannot change how the care recipient is after getting dementia, they can change their own attitude — with that sense of acceptance, gratitude, and being kind. This course makes people aware of attitudes that empower them — so that they can care better for themselves and also improve care for their loved ones.

**Can you explain what mindfulness is?**

Mindfulness is about paying attention in a particular way — in the present moment, on purpose and without judgement. It is the awareness that arises when we choose to notice what’s here. When we notice judgements arising within us, we can intentionally set them aside.

For example, my dad once gripped my arm very tightly and I instinctively pulled my arm away for fear that he would drag me. That was a natural reaction and in that moment, I judged myself, “Oh no, how could you do this to him?” With mindfulness, we notice

what is here in the moment without judgements. I can tell myself, “Hey this happened and I’m okay with it.”

Mindfulness allows us to tune in to what is here — like our bodily reaction, emotions or thoughts — and all these connect us to the present moment. Within that space of awareness, we now have a choice and can then decide how to respond.

**How did you get started with mindfulness as a technique to cope with caregiving?**

When I was studying Psychology at NUS, my professor introduced a module called Mindful Psychology. This module involved exercises like awareness of breathing, mindful eating, and body-scan practices that train our mind to re-focus on the body.

At the same time, my father had a stroke — which threw my life into disarray. The stroke limited his mobility and he came to rely increasingly on family members to get things done. It

*“Mindfulness practice helped me gain awareness of what I had control over.”*





was initially tough and I went through a period of denial.

Mindfulness practice helped me gain awareness of what I had control over. These included my emotions and “future-oriented” negative thoughts that arose. It helped me to stay more in the moment with my father. I also learnt to accept and let go of things I cannot control, like his medical condition. My father subsequently developed 2 other strokes and vascular dementia set in after that.

### How should a caregiver introduce mindfulness into his or her everyday life?

It is really about having that space for self-care. As caregivers, we spend a lot of time caring for others. As a result, we often get tired in that journey and neglect ourselves. Mindfulness practice is about taking care of ourselves by tuning in to how our body feels. So if the body is really tired, we need to make that call to say, “I need a break.” This means letting go instead of pushing through — which may lead to unintended consequences. For example, if we were feeding someone while feeling sleepy and tired, we might do something wrong.

Tuning in to our mind and body allows us to feel a sense of presence. This



is important when we care for a loved one. For example, putting my phone aside would allow me to be fully present when tending to my father, instead of being distracted by notifications. It really helps to notice whenever our mind drifts away and consciously reconnect it to whatever we are doing right now.

### Can you describe some simple mindfulness exercises that one can adopt?

One exercise is the “dot-be” technique. First, you consciously tell yourself to stop whatever you are doing. Close your eyes and breathe — and consciously invite this awareness into the body. Try to sense this awareness with your breath. It could be at the nose, chest or belly.

*“Tuning in to our mind and body allows us to feel a sense of presence.”*

Notice the breathing sensations — like your belly rising on the in-breath and just naturally let it go. You can then open your eyes when you feel ready.

Stopping like this — even if just for 30 seconds — helps the mind to settle and declutter, otherwise we will be in a fluster over what to do next. A caregiver’s life is often hectic, with many things to do. But if we let ourselves pause, we will feel ready to do the next thing.

Another exercise is just eating, but with presence. During our meals, we can intentionally focus on the experience

of eating itself by setting aside the distractions around us like the phone or the television. We can take the first few bites to appreciate what we are eating. Caregivers often share that just doing this helps them stay in the moment. It is one way to practise this sense of awareness.

### Can you share an example of a family where mindfulness practice left a positive change?

This was last year when we held an 8-week mindfulness course at our centre. They came together as a family of 5 — the mother, the father, the daughter, and two sons. The mother had a certain medical condition that affected her speech and mobility and the family

members were stressed. They came to the session with a lot of tension and anxiety.

As the 8-week journey progressed, how they communicated with each other started to change. This included choosing appropriate moments to speak and being open to listening as well. They felt less stress now and recognised when their minds rushed into the unknown future. Now they could guide themselves back to the present moment, knowing that they need to plan but need not get too caught up in it.

This helped them better attend to their mother’s needs. Even while caring for her, they could also notice how they were responding to her — which was previously with frustration and denial. I saw this shift in attitude toward



acceptance with a sense of gratitude. Rather than assign blame, the family members pitched in to help in whatever way they could. It was heart-warming to see them come together.

Mindfulness practice helped them be more aware of their habitual reactions and choose kinder actions and words.

*“It is just a consequence of the illness, but that should not change our love for them.”*

### Can persons with dementia themselves practise mindfulness?

There is a continuum for dementia — from mild to moderate to severe. For those with moderate to severe dementia, it is probably not possible. This is because mindfulness practice harnesses the brain’s pre-frontal cortex, which helps us with concentration. For persons with dementia, the pre-frontal cortex is usually affected. This explains why they get distracted very easily.

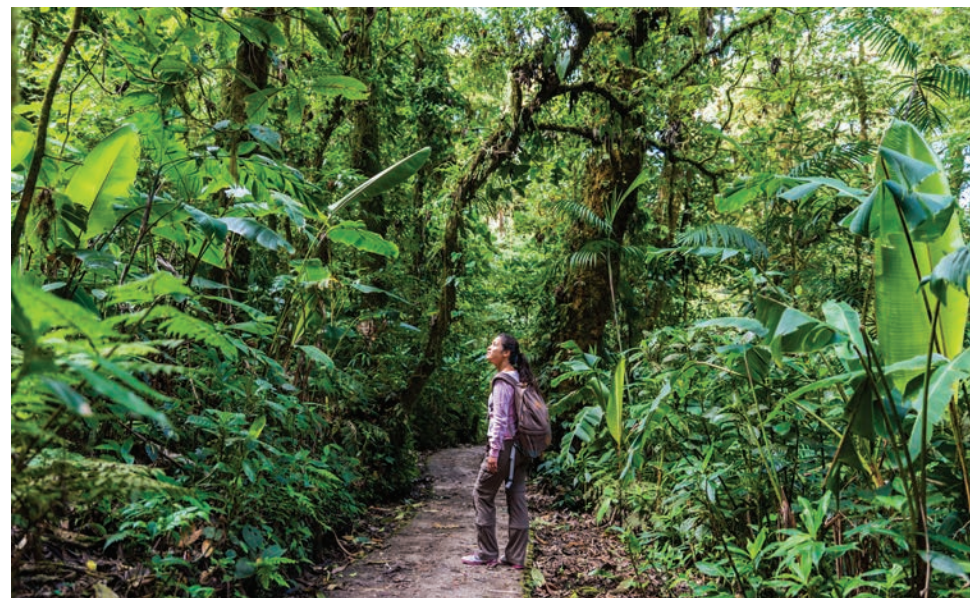
Those with mild dementia can try short practices. It wouldn’t be 30 or 45 minutes, but maybe for 1 or 2 minutes. I have guided my father through a body scan before and he seemed more relaxed after the practice. We include persons with mild dementia in our workshops. It helps them to just notice or accept the new changes in their lives.



### What distinguishes families that cope more successfully than others when caring for a loved one?

Family support is the number one thing. Caregivers who have attended our course share that they feel very alone in this journey, even within the family unit. Relatives may come visit but because they are not the 24/7 caregiver, they may see things a certain way and make comments that caregivers may disagree with, causing frustration.

Families that make it work for them have very strong mutual support. In these families, communication is open and they are not afraid to ask for help. I notice that this group is able to surf the wave of stress that comes with caregiving. They are open about



whatever comes their way instead of fearing that it may seem shameful. The openness and courage to be vulnerable makes a difference. Families that welcome that often thrive better in that journey of caregiving.

### What is your favourite hack — or smart tip — for caregiving?

Going for a walk alone in the company of nature. While caring for my dad, I sometimes got so frustrated that I needed a break. I would then leave home for a 10-minute walk outside. It need not be a walk. Sometimes, I would just sit outside the front door and look at the trees. It helps me refocus my attention and take time to rest. The hack would be that if things seem too challenging at

that moment, it is alright to step out to give ourselves that “me-time.”

*“It is alright to step out to give ourselves that ‘me-time.’”*

### What would be your dream invention or device for caregivers?

My dream device would be a reclining wheelchair that provides the same comfort as an air mattress or hospital bed. I was once asked what dream I wanted to fulfil for my dad and I replied that I would like to bring him out.

Because of his condition, he has to stay at home and lie in bed most of the time. All he sees is the white wall and the ceiling. It is not easy to transport him around. Imagine if we bring him out on this device and he needs to rest. You just press a button and the wheelchair reclines into a comfortable bed that is still mobile — that would be nice.

One challenge for caregivers is that while we want to bring our loved ones out, there are limitations to how the place can support them. The care recipient may need to rest during the visit, or you have to feed them but do not have the accessories or environment to accommodate that.

I brought my father to the Sea



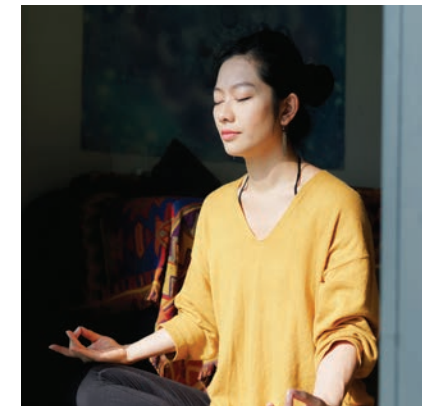
Aquarium and they very kindly accommodated our visit. They raised the temperature and even brought a hospital bed into the place itself. We stayed there for the night and he watched the fishes swim by. That was probably his most memorable night. I knew he would appreciate it.

That leads me to the other hack which is to bring them to an aquarium. For bed-bound care recipients, the home environment is literally a prison. Their eyes feast on the walls or the television and that's all to it. A dynamic environment with something that changes would help them pass each day with a sense of freshness injected into it.



Visit [www.brahmcentre.com](http://www.brahmcentre.com) to find out more about mindfulness.

## Eric's Guide to Mindfulness



- 1. “Dot-be” technique.** Stop whatever you are doing. Close your eyes and breathe. Sense an awareness with your breath, and let it go. Open your eyes when you feel ready.



- 2. Be present during mealtimes.** Set aside the distractions around us. Take the first few bites to appreciate what we are eating. Focus on the act of eating.



# IT TAKES A KAMPUNG

**Don't walk the journey alone.**

It is okay to ask for help — caregiving becomes easier with many helping hands. Involve the whole family, and perhaps even your neighbours. It makes a world of difference.





# Hacking is not rocket science

ONG KER-SHING, LEKKER ARCHITECTS



## What are important things to note when caring for a person with dementia?

It's often said: Treat the person, not the disease. It is easy to understand, intellectually, why we have to remember the person who has dementia, and not to allow caring for a person with dementia to slip into a disease-management model of care. And sometimes this is incredibly difficult, and challenging, and the caregiver(s) really needs to be kind to themselves if they lapse into automatic behaviours of care. To have a loved one suffering with dementia is already torment in itself, but to add constant guilt on top of that is too much.

The caregiver needs to remain sane and healthy as well, so that they can really be there for the person with dementia. Because dementia is a progressive disease, the conditions are really dynamic, they are constantly changing. There might be some plateaus but then there is always, inevitably, deterioration. Caregivers need to be able to see these changes and adjust accordingly: adjust the way they speak, the kinds of things they need to do (like whether they need to switch from drinking water directly from a glass, to a straw, to even a syringe), the texture of the food they make, the amount of independent activity and other

emotional and relational expectations they have of the person with dementia.

Caring is active and requires constant observation and evaluation and being in the moment. It is ironic, because at the onset of dementia, what we notice the most is loss of memory—and painfully, the loss of common memories made together—that family members of a person with dementia often focus so much on the loss of a past and the loss of a future together. But it is the ever changing present that is where we need to be. Carers quickly learn to become clever problem-solvers and hackers. Being a hacker is not necessarily rocket science, it is making small tweaks



to things that already exist, that we already use, to suit a new need. Small adjustments also allows for a familiar situation to persist whilst adjusting as necessary to minimise danger, increase comfort and happiness, et cetera.

## What are important triggers to avoid when caring for a person with dementia?

I think this really depends on the individual. From my own observation, the “pre-morbid personality” of the person with dementia plays a huge role in the disease progression, or at least the behavioural manifestations of the disease as it progresses.

For example, my father was always a very independent person. He was brilliant, authoritative, proud, a problem-solver. This made it very difficult for him to accept, in the early stages of the disease, that he had a problem that he would not be able to overcome. It also made it very difficult for him to

*“Carers quickly learn to become clever problem-solvers and hackers.”*





accept help, especially from his own children. My good friend's mother, on the other hand, had always been more dependent on her husband and children to do things with and for her. With her dementia then, she was willing for her children to take over her house-work and even personal care.

### Can persons with dementia do things for themselves?

Yes, in the earlier stages, certainly. It is crucial to allow the person with dementia to do as much as possible for themselves, to retain their sense of dignity and self for as long as possible.

### Are there ways to help persons with dementia experience more joy and delight? Do you try to recreate sensations that the care recipient likes?

This gets difficult as the disease progresses, because certain things just can no longer be done because they become dangerous, like, eating ice, for example. Also, it becomes harder and harder to know whether something is delightful or whether the person is enjoying themselves any more.

So I find that at the advanced stage of the disease, which is where my father is now, we have to rely on some more “universal” ideas about what is joyful, like taking him to sit outdoors in the garden in the shade when there is a cool breeze blowing, or stroking his arm, or just putting a hand on his shoulder, as

touch is so important for well-being.

I think sometimes we have to use common sense and empathy. Like when the person with dementia has to eat blended food because they are no longer chewing properly: do we blend it all up into a big pot of mush? Or do we blend or mash individual components of the meal so that there is still some discrete tastes: steamed broccoli still tasting of broccoli, fish tasting of fish...

### *“Combine compassion, common sense, and own gut instinct and just do your best.”*

### Can you share with us your favourite caregiving hack?

There was a while that my father would only drink water out of one glass. As his dementia progressed, he would only recognise water if it was in that glass. We only had one of those glasses, so it became a bit difficult if say, Dad was at his sister's house for lunch, and would not drink water as a result. Luckily, IKEA has such a huge range of glasses, so we found something almost identical there. We bought a box of 6 of them so we could put a couple at my aunt's house, and a few around our house, so the water-drinking issue at that time was solved.

### What is your favourite IKEA product for caregiving?

It's such a simple one, really. We love using the IKEA shower curtains as mattress protectors. They are large, so they are easy to tuck into beds, they are completely waterproof, and they are cheap.

### How do you — and other caregivers in your family — look after your own needs?

We are lucky as we are a big family and we have a couple of amazing helpers who have been with us for years and years. This means that there are separations of duties and each person can do what they do best. All the duties, responsibilities, and emotional weight of caregiving do not lie only on one person's shoulders. We each contribute in the way that we can, and that we do



best. I find that in our family, this is the most sustainable way. It also means that the person ultimately making the big decisions and managing the care can appeal to a relatively (major emphasis on relatively) objective state when it is needed.

### What is the most important thing you have learnt in this caregiving journey? What advice would you offer to other caregivers?

In addition to everything I've said above, really that there's no right and wrong. Combine compassion, common sense, and own gut instinct and just do your best.

### What would be a dream invention or device to care for a person with dementia?

Caregiving can become all-consuming. I would love a magic hat carousel that caregivers could put on and that helps them to switch channels as it were and see things from different points of view—points of view that might be hard to get to because the role and responsibility of caregiving is so all-consuming. It would help them to wear those proverbial different “hats” and gain some perspective, and some relief.

## Shing's Hacks



1. Blend individual components of the meal to keep their discrete tastes.



2. Have multiple of their drinking cups around relatives/friends' houses. This helps them in their drinking habit.
3. Shower curtains make good mattress protectors in the event of incontinence.

▶ See page 162-163 for more tips and tricks on coping with incontinence.





## LET'S GET CRACKING

Now that you've made it to the end of the book, it's time to get started on your hacking projects. Grab your tools and involve the whole family. Let's do this!

### DISCLAIMER

The ideas in this catalogue have been gathered to suggest ways to improvise and expand care for persons with dementia. While every effort has been made to ensure that the hacks contained in this catalogue do not pose any undue health and safety hazards, we nonetheless urge all readers to exercise their own judgement on the safety, suitability and appropriateness of these ideas to their own respective caregiving situations. Readers are encouraged to do their own research, and to always consult a professional when in doubt.

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# You can do it yourself, and we're here to help you.

Here are 8 quick-start tips.



### MAKE IT YOUR OWN

There is no right way to hack an object or environment. Adjust it to your own needs; do it your way.



### IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CONVENIENCE

Pre-packed kits are one trick. What are the other mental kits to organise your life?



### A SMALL TWEAK GOES A LONG WAY

Hacking your environment doesn't have to be complicated. Sometimes all it takes is a tiny adjustment to make life easier.



### ROUTINE AUTOMATES

Externalise tasks into reminders and habituated actions to reduce the burden of remembering.



### HAND EXERCISES HELP THE BRAIN

Encourage them to use their hands. It stimulates the brain and resists the onset of dementia.



### MAKE IT COLOURFUL, MAKE IT POP

When we see things clearly, it makes life easier to live.



### DURABLE & UNBREAKABLE

Material matters. Choose sturdy and hardy materials to ensure safety, and you'll never have to worry about breaking anything.



### MULTIPLES OF THE SAME MAKE LIFE EASY

Keep back-ups of their favourite or frequently used items. It's always a good idea to have a plan B, and C, and D...

Don't forget to have fun.



# About the Lien Foundation

We are a Singapore-based philanthropic organisation guided by a 'radical' approach to tackle problems at its roots. We view innovation as a permanent state of exploration, and embed design into our work in early childhood development, eldercare and end-of-life issues, as a key driver of value creation. Social problems are not isolated fragments that can be unpicked or solved with a hammer chipping away at the marble. Often, we find them tethered to the fabric of society's long-held assumptions, scraps of archaic practices and ingrained patterns of thinking. It is this reason we turn to design to recast our thinking, to orientate towards shaping new experiences and behaviour, as well as to focus on fresh approaches and solutions.

Our catalogue of design publications includes Hospitable Hospice, a handbook which offers universal concepts and design principles for future hospices, with the aim of improving the end-of-life journey. A Different Class showcases 10 typologies of preschool spaces, while Second Beginnings presents 10 new architectural concepts of community spaces for seniors. Others have taken a leaf off those pages and incorporated those ideas in actual projects. From blueprint to the built environment, we developed a "living classroom", based on the laboratory school concept, for trainee teachers to observe lessons and complete their

practicum and research. Singapore's first purpose-built inclusive preschool was subsequently conceived, allowing children of all abilities to grow together in a supportive environment. We also reimagined play by getting designers to work with children and teachers to hack an existing playground and create their own play space.

With the vision of ushering in a new era in eldercare, we are spearheading a number of innovations, including a residential care facility for people with dementia which has an onsite lifestyle club and day activity centre for the community. We also started Singapore's first dementia-friendly community to ignite public awareness and expand the network of dementia friends. In the pipeline is a dedicated, dementia-friendly social space for seniors within a museum. It will offer curated programmes that leverage digital technology and facilitate inter-generational experiences on Singapore's history and heritage. To combat frailty among seniors, we are developing a chain of gyms for seniors in the community, designed to be vibrant social hubs.

Design holds great promise to solve the most pressing challenges of our time. We conscientiously embrace the emerging possibilities afforded by new technologies, and hope to engender a new breed of designers as catalysts for change in our ecosystem of partners and projects.

[www.lienfoundation.org](http://www.lienfoundation.org)  
[www.facebook.com/JourneywithGeorge](https://www.facebook.com/JourneywithGeorge)



## IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP

There's no problem too big, or too small, that the community cannot fix. If you're ever feeling lost and helpless, or simply just tired, don't hesitate to reach out to support groups for guidance. It takes a village, and it's only a phone call away.

Some useful resources:

### Alzheimer's Disease Association (ADA)

To find out more about ADA's dementia care, call the Dementia Helpline at 6377 0700 or visit [www.alz.org.sg](http://www.alz.org.sg) for more information.

### Brahm Centre

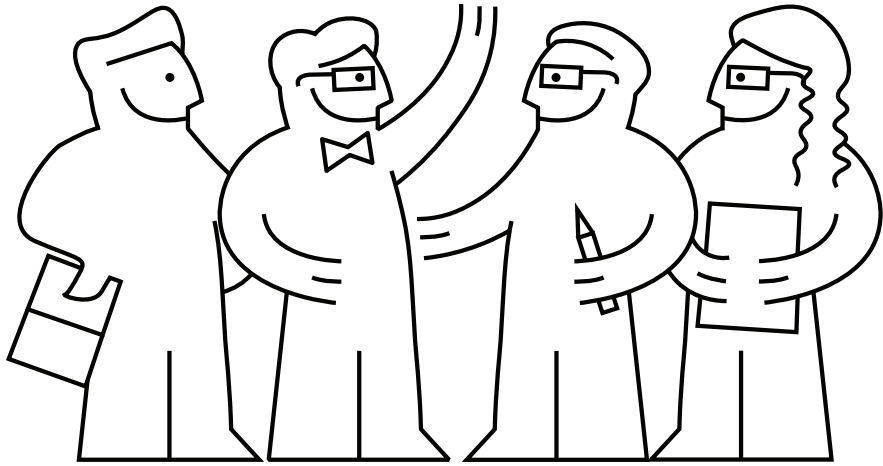
Find out more at [www.brahmcentre.com](http://www.brahmcentre.com), or drop them an email at [info@brahmcentre.com](mailto:info@brahmcentre.com). Alternatively, visit any of their 3 centres: Novena, MacPherson or Simei.

### Forget Us Not

To access a series of 50 Caregiving Videos, please visit: [www.forgetusnot.sg/videos.html](http://www.forgetusnot.sg/videos.html)



# THE HACK CARE TEAM



**01 Lee Poh Wah** Lien Foundation.  
**02 Gabriel Lim** Lien Foundation.  
**03 Ivan Loh** Lien Foundation.  
**04 Radha Basu** Lien Foundation.

## IT'S ALL ABOUT TEAMWORK

HACK CARE is the result of the combined efforts of the Lien Foundation, Lekker Architects and Lanzavecchia + Wai Studio. Each of the persons named here was instrumental in bringing this book to fruition. We also thank Ruth Wong, Eric Lim and Dr. Wong Chek Hooi, for generously sparing their time to offer their insights and wisdom.

### Lien Foundation

Lien Foundation is a Singapore-based philanthropic organisation that seeks to inspire social change and improve the lives of seniors, children with special needs and those who are born into low-income homes.

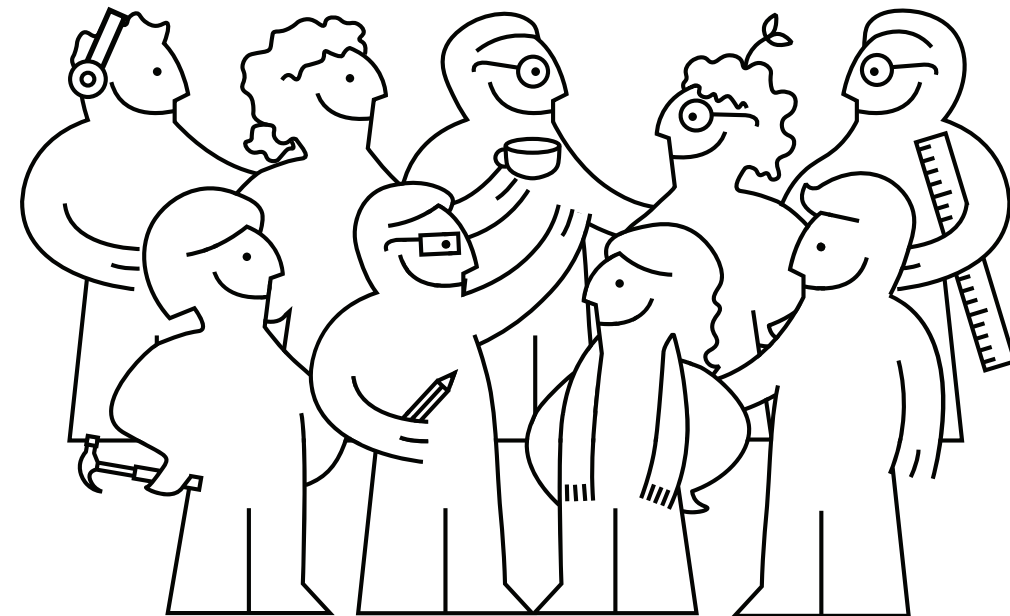
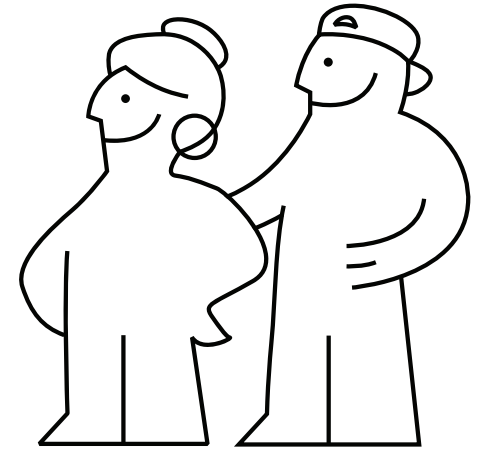
### Lekker Architects

Lekker Architects is a Singapore-based group of designers, architects, and social scientists whose interest lies in projects with big ambitions: from buildings that promote inclusion, neighbourhoods that encourage walking and socialising, to dreamlike retail experiences that are exciting and transformative.

### Lanzavecchia + Wai Design Studio

Lanzavecchia + Wai Studio is a multi-award winning industrial design studio based both in Singapore and Italy. To them, being designers means being researchers, engineers, craftsmen and story-tellers all at the same time.

**06 Francesca Lanzavecchia** Lanzavecchia + Wai Design Studio.  
**05 Hunn Wai** Lanzavecchia + Wai Design Studio.



**07 Joshua Comaroff** Lekker Architects.  
**08 Ong Ker-Shing** Lekker Architects.  
**09 Ronald Lim** Lekker Architects.  
**10 Lua Jin Wei** Lekker Architects.  
**11 Chen Shunann** Lekker Architects.  
**12 Isabella Ong** Lekker Architects.  
**13 Goi Yong Chern** Lekker Architects.  
**14 Emiline Elangovan** Lekker Architects.  
**15 Jason Tan** Lekker Architects.



