

# OUR SENSORY LOUNGE

By Sandy Deininger, Director of Therapeutic Recreation

*The walk is one of anticipation. It is a short journey that takes you past several residents and a few friendly faces as the corridor leads you through Homewood at Martinsburg's Memory Care Unit. Is the anticipation of the space one of stimulation? Or maybe it's an aversion from overstimulation? Some visualize the space as simply a play area or a room filled with odd items, to others a parlor or sitting room. But to a resident diagnosed with dementia or Alzheimer's the lounge is a safe space, a respite filled with soothing sights, sounds and smells, and the opportunity to stimulate senses, reduce agitation, or to be removed from the hustle and stressors of the medical care unit.*



Recently, as an alternative to harmful pharmacological medications, sensory lounges have become more prevalent and are regularly used in Alzheimer's or dementia treatment protocols to reduce behaviors, decrease agitation, and stimulate a resident's five senses (Jakob & Collier, 2014). The sensory lounge is a defined, safe space where the resident can be calmed by aromatherapeutic treatments, indulge in

tasting sweet or savory foods, touch velvety, supple, warm or cool-to-the-touch textures, be enveloped by soft, classical, or spa-like music and sounds and experience diffused, soft lighting in inviting hues of blue, green, or lavender.

The sensory lounge at Homewood of Martinsburg has been newly renovated, thanks in part to a grant from the Homewood at Martinsburg Auxiliary, directed funding and special donations from a few of our exemplary families and individual donors. The room has been purposed with new and revitalized fixtures and equipment.

Distinct to Homewood at Martinsburg's remodeled sensory lounge is an extraordinary hand painted (by a local artist), oceanic mural that invites one to exist and float among fish, dolphins, turtles, and other sea life. Additionally, the walls have been adorned in a calming, soft blue and the lighting is generally soft and dim. For more stimulation, the blinds to the window can be opened to allow sunlight to enter and fully light the space or allow a resident to view and experience the changing seasons of the year. The ambiance of the room is enriched by classical or soft music and the air is filled with soothing aromas and the healing effects of lavender, citrus, or baked goods. Inviting, overstuffed chairs with soft blankets and pillows have been strategically placed around the room, encouraging one to sit a spell, grab a book, a pictorial, or a journal of poems or spiritual devotions and ease through part of one's day. Other visual effects including fiber-optics and optical equipment are readily available to use should the resident require additional visual or sighted stimulation.

The Therapeutic Recreation staff at Homewood of Martinsburg has frequently utilized the newly renovated sensory lounge and integrated the space into care protocols and activities. The room is a safe, secure, calming environment that facilitates beneficial, one-on-one interactions with the resident. Staff have an unobtrusive space to redirect a resident who may have become unhappy or irritated, with the expectation the sensory stimulation will modify and lead to a more normalized, socially acceptable pattern of behavior. The sensory lounge has provided a learning environment where residents can use a plethora of electronic and video equipment in the lounge. This has increased residents' motor skills, concentration and has allowed residents to become more attentive.

The next time you're in Martinsburg, PA visit us. Journey into the Memory Care Unit and take a break in our sensory lounge. Allow the environment to stimulate or sooth the senses. Be infused with healing from the aromas that fill the room. Once in a soft, overstuffed chair with a book or journal, you may not want to return to your daily task or labor. Just note though, you may have to take your turn. The Homewood at Martinsburg residents love their new sensory lounge!



**HOMEWOOD**  
AT MARTINSBURG

Jakob, A. & Collier, L. (2014). How to Make a Sensory Room for People Living with Dementia. Arts and Humanities Research Council. Retrieved June 13, 2022, from: <https://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/id/eprint/30132/1/Jakob-A-29602.pdf>