Deeper Dive: Café Activities and Café People

JF&CS Memory Café Percolator
Exhale Collaborative Workshop 3, April 3, 2024

For more than 150 years, Jewish Family & Children’s Service has been helping individuals and families build a strong foundation for resilience and well-being across the lifespan.
Where I am coming from

• Clinical social worker, JF&CS in Greater Boston
• JF&CS Memory Café
• JF&CS Memory Café Percolator www.jfcsboston.org/Percolator
• EMC2: www.emc2project.org
Any burning questions?
What to do at a Memory Café and Who does it (deeper dive)
What word comes to mind when you think of Memory Cafes?
81 responses
We will discuss:

- Room set-up
- Arrival/Welcome
- Main activity period
- Closing
Room Set-up

• Dementia-friendly room set-up (limited background noise, clear signage and wayfinding, not too many choices)

• Information table off to the side

• It’s great to share information about additional memory cafés!
Arrival/Welcome

- Encourage interaction - use volunteers AND sociable participants as greeters and “minglers”
- Allow for a flexible start time
- Establish a welcome “ritual”
- Limit distraction. Space between seating. Instrumental music.
Create an ambience

Aroma de Café in Lawrence, MA

Café de los Recuerdos in Elgin, IL
Main activity period

• TimeSlips
• I’m Still Here
• West Falls Center for the Arts
Main Activity Period

- Making music, such as singalongs, drumming, etc.
- Visual art-making
- Listening to music
- Holiday celebrations
- Games
- Fitness, dance
- Other cultural activity, such as sports, local history, etc.
- Nature or animal activity
- Art appreciation
- Poetry or writing
- Virtual travel
- Intergenerational activity
- Field trips
- Cooking
- Other (movies, reminiscence, flower arranging, jokes, meals, etc)
- Crafts
- Reiki, hand massage etc
- Speakers
- Sharing hobbies
- Storytelling
“Sports vs. Arts”

JF&CS Memory Café: Talking Red Sox with Jim Kenton, Mike McNulty, and Bill Nowlin (3/5/21)
Set a Theme

- Include a few (three-four?) elements
- Make it multi-sensory
- One of Jim, Mike, Reg and Michael’s themes: “When We Were Young”
  - Film or TV clip
  - Music
  - Game
  - Participants share their stories (real or imagined)
For each activity: How will participants engage?

• Can participants with varying cognitive needs take part?

• Sometimes there is a conflict – the Improv Conundrum
DIY vs. Guest Presenters

• Either works

• Guest presenters take the pressure off you while you settle into the operational routine

• You can do the same type of activity every time, or mix it up
Improvise

• If everyone’s loving it, extend it
• If it isn’t working out, move on
• Focus on the feelings, not the agenda
The specter of childishness

- Adults need to play and may love to play
- Antenna are up for being treated as children
  - Older adults
  - People living with disabilities
- Tends to come up most with visual arts
Closing

• Hand out information for next time – plus extra copies
• The formal closing and the “real” closing –
  • Some participants will leave early
  • Some will stay and socialize if that is allowed
Let’s talk about people: staff, volunteers, and participants (deeper dive)
Roles

• Set up food/materials
• Greeter
• Buddy for new participants
• MC
• Activity facilitator
• Share poems, jokes, artwork, etc. (“Poet in Residence”)

These roles can be performed by staff, volunteers, or participants

“Keep in mind the value of feeling a sense of purpose. Even a small task, like handing out pencils, gives the person a sense of importance and belonging.”

– Laurie Scherrer, Advocate

Stay open to unique roles, such as “decorator”
Most important mindset for staff, volunteers

- Hospitality
- Create a feeling of home
- It’s like hosting a party
- Encourage volunteers to spread out around the room!
Where to find volunteers?

- Volunteers from our other programs: 41%
- Local college students: 15%
- Local high school students: 5%
- Older adults who live in our residence: 5%
- Older adults who attend our senior center: 36%
- Community members: 51%

Other: personal friends; church members; care partners who responded to social media ad; med students; staff from sponsoring companies; former intern; Senior Tax Workoff Program; board and committee members

Percolator survey, December 2018, 48 respondents
Do you do a CORI/background check?

- No: 32%
- Yes: 68%
Training

• Tailored to the memory café context
• Available as needed for new staff, volunteers

Resources:

• Attend another memory café
• Alzheimer’s Association NY Chapter
• Dementia Friends NY – PSS Circle of Care, Dona Giannotti at DGiannotti@pssusa.org
• Write your own tip sheet/short video
• EMC2 training modules - to be developed
Grief and loss at the Café

• Supporting staff and volunteers
• Supporting other café participants
• Roles for care partners who wish to continue attending
Supporting staff and volunteers

- Expectations: Let them know that this is a natural part of memory cafés.
- Training: Let them know how your memory café handles transition and loss, and give them an opportunity to express concerns.
- For you: Remember that staff and volunteers are impacted emotionally and benefit from acknowledgement, support, and rituals.
How do memory cafés address loss?

• Percolator survey, September 2019
• 81 respondents
• Two schools of thought:
  • Don’t remind participants of disease progression and death
  • Share and normalize disease progression and death, and establish structures of mutual support
Which is right?

- **It depends! Some considerations:**
  - How bonded are your café participants?
  - What is the sector in which your café operates? A museum...a church...etc.
  - What are cultural patterns of your participants regarding talking about and coping with death and loss?
When a participant stops attending, does your café reach out to check on them?

- Yes: 46
- No: 16
- The issue hasn’t come up: 19
When do you reach out?

- After 2 – 3 missed sessions: 51%
- After 1 missed session: 13%
- Other responses:
  - All guests receive a call monthly to remind them and check in
  - “We are a small, close-knit café and all participants share their contact info and are in frequent touch.”
  - “Whether I check in depends how long they have been coming and if there has been a health issue, etc.”
If a participant stops attending, how likely is it that you’ll eventually find out the reason why?

- **Always**: 11
- **Usually**: 36
- **Sometimes**: 31
- **Rarely**: 3
- **Never**: 0
Has the loss of participants due to death or disease progression affected your café very much?

- Yes, a lot: 7
- Somewhat: 29
- Not much: 25
- This issue hasn't come ...: 20
If the participant with dementia dies or is unable to continue attending, do you invite the care partner to continue attending?

- Always: 26
- Depends on the circumstances: 29
- Never: 7
Do care partners attend on their own in these circumstances?

![Bar chart showing attendance]

- Often: 7
- Sometimes: 27
- Never: 28
Do you have a specific way to acknowledge losses and transitions at your café?

- 18% (11 respondents) DO have a specific way
- 82% (50 respondents) DO NOT have a specific way
How cafés respond

• Always ask the care partner what they would like. Ask their permission to share.

• Six respondents make an announcement to their café mailing list. Example: include a death announcement and link to the obituary in a monthly Constant Contact e-newsletter for the café.

• Three respondents send a card or another item (flowers, cookies). Some obtain signatures on the card from café participants.

• One respondent holds a moment of silence at their café for someone who has died.

• Many cafés provide referrals to additional support if needed.
Tribute or memorial sponsorship

• Designate a donation range

• Talk with the care partner about what would be meaningful to them. Suggestions:
  • Share a photo or two of the person
  • Care partner tells a story about the person

• Ask the care partner if they want you to share more detailed information with the group or not. For example: should you mention the sponsorship in your flyer or information about that group meeting?
Comments about if/how to respond

• “It’s case by case. It depends how regular their attendance was.”
• “I only share this information with the folks attending the cafe if the care partner specifically asks me to do this.”
• “We do a "warm hand-off" to support services if needed.”
• “It is never easy and one size does not fit all.”
Keep staff and volunteers in mind

• They also are affected by losses
• The impact may when someone special passes, or it may be cumulative
• Simple rituals can help
• Rituals done at the café can be kept general so that people can use them as they need to
Percolator section of next workshops

• Workshop #4: Understanding (and reducing) stigma
Your questions

Let’s talk!