

Family Activity: *The Nature of Forgetting*

“Our brains are amazing. They work hard to store memories. They help us to make sense of the world. They control everything that we think, feel, say and do. Our brains make us who we are. Like all parts of the body, brains sometimes become ill. There are illnesses that stop a person’s brain from working properly.

When a person has one of these illnesses, their brain starts to have problems doing all the jobs it has to do.

The person may start to have problems with remembering, thinking, speaking or seeing what or where things are. They might say or do things that seem strange to us. They may find it more difficult to do everyday things. They may not seem like the same person they used to be.

Doctors use the word dementia to describe these different problems.”

– [Alzheimer's Research UK](#)

In [The Nature of Forgetting](#), Tom is experiencing the first stages of dementia. As audience members we watch his memories slip away through non-linear storytelling, choreography and music. His childhood, adolescence and adulthood all pass by, showing a life that is full of love, laughter and loss.

Many families are affected by dementia, these activities and discussions have been created so families can use [The Nature of Forgetting](#) to talk about their own lives, as well as learn more about this difficult subject. You can read more about dementia [here](#).

In this Family Activity, learn a bit more about memory and think back on the celebratory and challenging times in your own life.

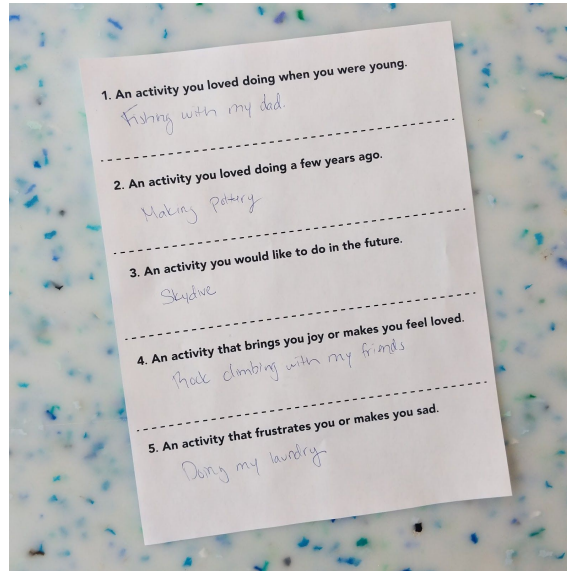
AT HOME

As there are few words in [The Nature of Forgetting](#), the talented performers help you understand the story with just their bodies. In this activity, practice your physical storytelling skills.

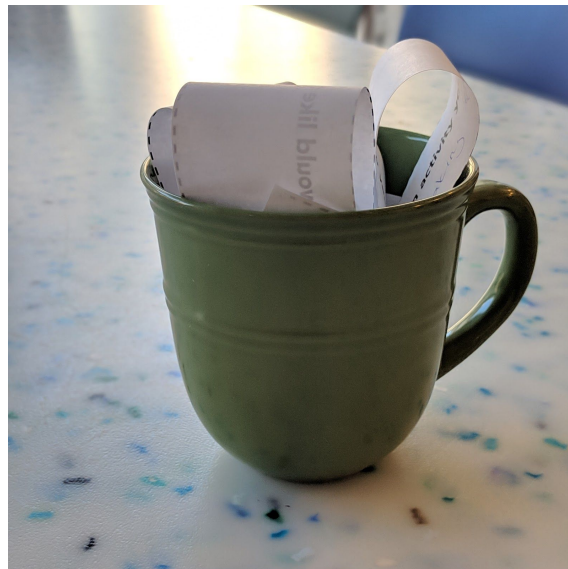
Materials: [Activity Worksheet](#), cup

Step One: Gather your family and have everyone answer the prompts on this [Activity Worksheet](#). Each person should fill out their own sheet.

Check out our example!



Step Two: Cut the [Activity Worksheet](#) along the dotted line and mix the slips of paper together in a cup.



Step Three: One by one, choose a slip of paper at random and perform the written action, until someone else guesses correctly. Remember, don't use any words! To help out the guessers, try to really embody the emotion and the activity.

Step Four: When everyone has had a turn or there are no slips of paper left, take a moment to reflect on the experience.

- Did you already know the favorite activities of those playing?
- Was there anything that surprised you?
- Is there one you want to hear more about?
- Were there any similarities in activities?

BONUS: See if you can figure out which activity belongs to which prompt!

ON YOUR WAY

A scent, a sound, a place—so many things can remind you of the past. [*The Nature of Forgetting*](#) uses clothing to spark Tom’s memories.

As you set off on your journey to The New Victory Theater, have a conversation about what you’re wearing.

Step One: Pick one item of clothing you are currently wearing.

Step Two: Answer a few of the following prompts about your chosen item.

- Has this piece of clothing gone on adventures with you? Where is the most exciting place you have worn it?
- Is there a specific memory that you associate with this piece of clothing?
- Is there a small stain or snag in the fabric? How did you get it?
- When did you receive or purchase this article of clothing? Where were you? Why did you buy it or receive it?

Step Three: Switch! It is someone else’s turn to share.

BONUS: Look at the person you’re travelling with. Is there a specific way that they dress that reminds you of them? Maybe it’s a scent, a specific color or style. Tell them about it!

Take a moment to look at your outfit today. Try to recall today’s new memories when you wear it in the future.

AFTER THE SHOW

After seeing the show, have a moment of reflection with these questions:

- What is memory? Can memory change?
- What changed about Tom's memories as the show went on?
- How did Tom's family help him adjust to his new life with dementia?
- What were some things you noticed that made Tom happy?
- What brought him uneasiness or sadness?
- At the end of your own life, who are the people you will remember most?
- What moments from your own life have shaped who you are today?

Memories are created every second of our lives. Some things we want to keep close and dear to our hearts forever. In this activity, create a family memory box that you can add to and revisit every year.

Step One: Choose a container to hold your memories. This could be a shoe box, tupperware or a cardboard box.

Step Two: Have each member of your household pick one thing to add to the box that's tied to a memory from this year. Here are a few things that you could add:

- A picture with a few words written on the back of what is happening in the photo
- A symbol or trinket that represents a current interest
- A newspaper article
- A written list of memories from the past year that had a strong impact on your life

Here's our example.



Step Three: Everyone in your family will place their items into the box and explain:

- Why did they choose this item?
- What are some other highlights about this item that they would like to share?

Step Four: Close the box with a rope or a ribbon. Make sure you can open it back up to keep adding things as the year continues.

Step Five: Choose a date to open the box and relive what you placed inside together.

AND BEYOND

There are many resources and options to help children and families learn about dementia. There are also amazing sources that house the memories of people from all over the world. Below are some of our suggestions to help deepen your understanding of [The Nature of Forgetting](#) and to continue conversations around dementia and memory.

- How to explain [dementia](#) to different age groups
- Practice memory [games](#)
- Volunteer [opportunities](#) near you
- [Stories](#) from people all over the world, as well as ways to save your own memories
- A [video](#) where a kid meets a woman with Alzheimer's