

"When I think of what makes me happy I don't think of things —I think of what's happening to me right now, this group and what we're doing. We're talking about poetry and it stretches the mind, feeds the imagination."

—Peter, APP-MN

participant with late-stage memory loss

Alzheimer's Poetry Project Minnesota

Zoë Bird, APP-MN Director

4918 37th Ave. So.

Minneapolis, MN 55417

612.432.9196

zozettebird@gmail.com

www.alzpoetry.org

Building a Poetry Program

Poetry Session Tips

- Have everyone in a circle.
- Greet people, shake their hands and tell them you will be performing and creating poems with them.
- While you may be seated during the session, you may also move closer to people and kneel so you are not always standing over them when talking.
- You may also choose to stand and recite a poem to give it emphasis.
- Ask permission before asking a question. "May I ask you a question, please?"
- Thank people for their creativity and performance.

Overview:

The APP engages the participants in the recitation of classic poems and creation of new poems. The session leader uses a call and response technique: reciting a line from a well-known poem and coaching the group to echo the line.

Coupling this performance technique with an open-ended question enables a group poem to be composed based on the participants' responses.

The hour-long sessions divide into 30 minutes of performing poems and 30 minutes of creating a new poem. Each session ends with the performance of the new work.

Call and Response:

Recite a line of high-energy poetry. Have the group echo you. This is an aerobic activity that helps to build and hold attention.

Discussion Starter:

Use poems as a flashpoint for discussions. Build questions based on the subject matter of the poem. Reinforce the answers by reciting the poem using the call and response technique.

Create a Group Poem:

Use the simple prompt of asking an open-ended question. Choose a classic poem (or another poem you love that has great rhythm and lots of sensory information) as a model and then base the prompt on the subject matter of the poem. For example, "Daffodils," by Wordsworth might lead you to ask what spring smells like, tastes like, sounds like, looks like and feels like. The group's answers become the lines of the poem.

Props—Use items people can smell, feel, hold:

Tree poems: Bring in leaves and branches
Garden poems: Bring in herbs, vegetables and flowers
Sports poems: Bring in a Nerf ball to play catch with

Poetry Tips

Alternate between different styles of performance and types of poems. Try a high-energy, rhythmic poem followed by a funny poem, and then a love poem.

Elements of performing poetry: projection, articulation, pacing of the recitation, dynamics and bringing out the emotional content of the poem.