

Meaningful Engagement Resource Guide:

Evidence-based activities for older adults



Behavioural Supports Ontario

Soutien en cas des troubles du comportement en Ontario

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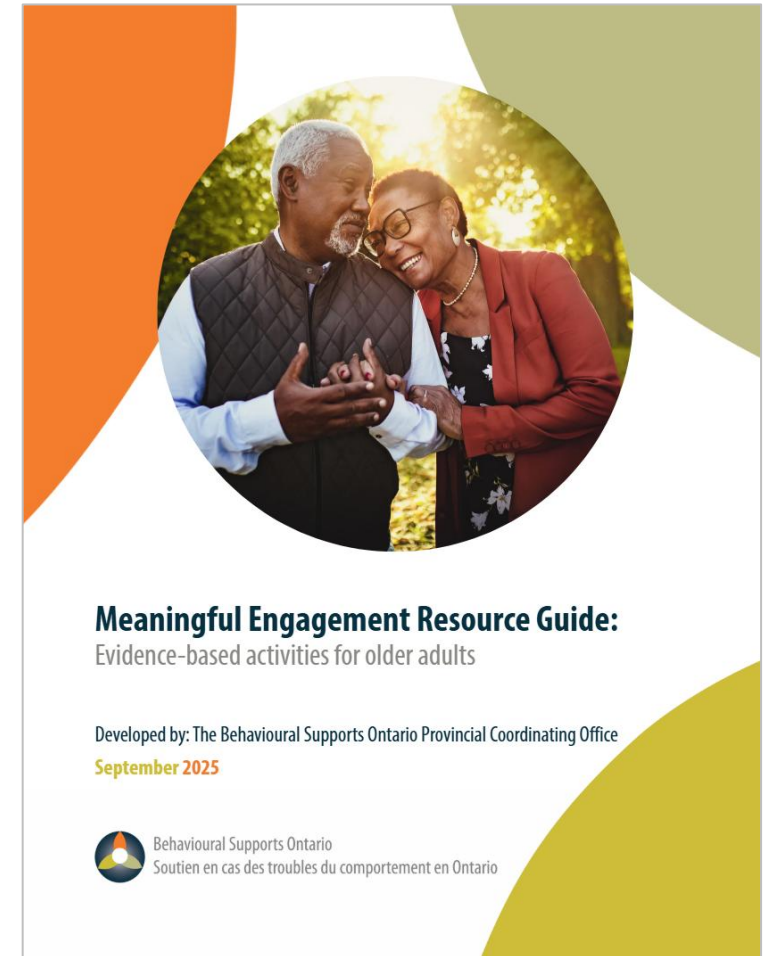
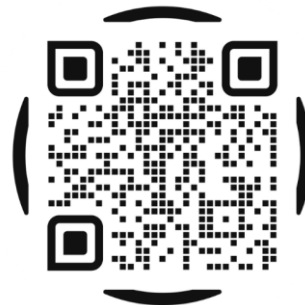
Purpose:

Offer a range of evidence-based, non-pharmacological activities designed to promote purposeful engagement and enhance the well-being of older adults across various care sectors.

Leadership of Project:

- Courtney Stasiuk-Mohr (Project Specialist, BSO PCO)
- Mélanie Beaulieu (NE PRC)
- Melissa Laroche (BSO Acute Care Co-chair)

Official Launch Date: September 9, 2025



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Thank you to all our contributors!

A diverse group of individuals from across the province participated in reviewing the tool and providing suggestions and feedback.

- Point of Care Team Members (e.g., Nurse, Rec Therapy)
- Family Care Partners
- People with Lived Experience (e.g., Residents)
- Educators (e.g., PRC)
- Clinical Coaches
- Directors of Communication
- Project Specialists



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I feel seen. I feel heard. this makes a real difference.

It's not just about keeping busy - it's about truly engaging and cherishing our time together.

So many practical ideas!

It helps my family understand how to include me, not just care for me.

The activities here remind me that I still have so much to offer.

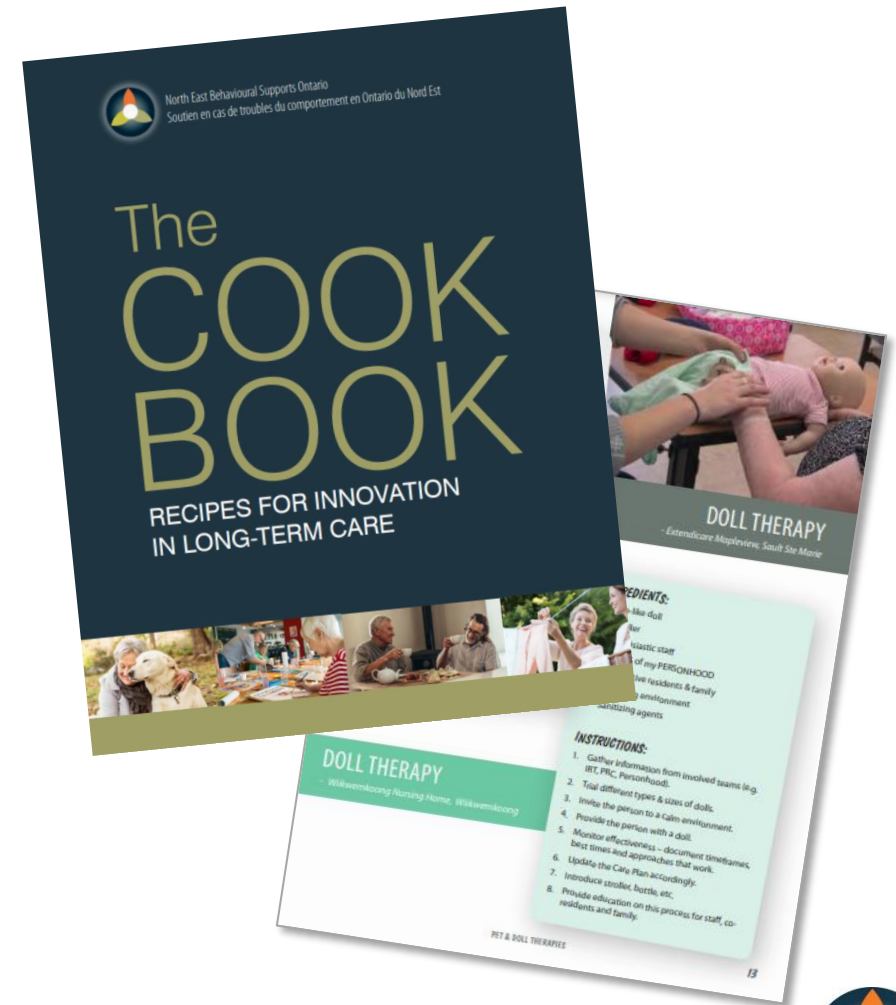


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Background & History

- The *new* Resource Guide builds on NE BSO *Cookbook: Recipes for Innovation in LTC*.
- First introduced at the 2019 North East BSO/Seniors Mental Health Consultation Service event.
- Created collaboratively by LTC homes in the North East and their partners.
- The “recipes” highlight emerging and best practices from North East BSO focusing on non-pharmacological strategies to support residents in Long-Term Care.

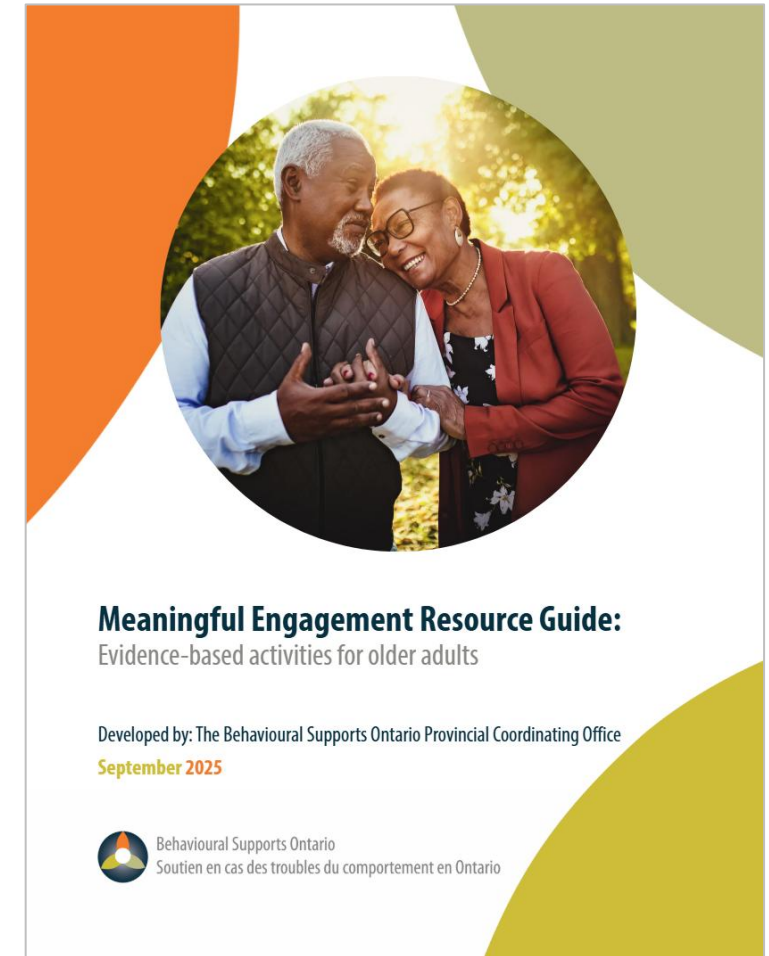


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Background of the *NEW* Resource Guide:

- Created an enhanced resource guide for ALL sectors.
- Promotes non-pharmacological approaches to unmet needs.
- Provides inclusive, accessible strategies that embrace diversity & culture.
- Aims to reduce chemical & physical restraint use.
- Fosters purposeful engagement and improved quality of life for older adults.
- Wide range of users – point of care team members, volunteers, family, even other older adult leaders/residents in LTC.



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Table of Contents:

- Introduction
- Multisensory Therapies
- Memory and Reflection
- Body & Movement
- Creative & Expressive Arts
- Cognitive Stimulation & Skill Development
- Technology & Multi-media
- Beliefs & Practice

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We want to hear from you!

Your feedback is important to us. Please take a moment to share your thoughts on the *Meaningful Engagement Resource Guide*.
[Click here to complete the feedback survey.](#)
Thank you for your time and support!



Feedback Form:

- Collecting this feedback is important to ensure the tool remains relevant, effective, and continuously improved to meet the needs of users.
- Click on the virtual link or use the QR code to complete the survey – found on page #2 of the resource guide.



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Guidelines for Use:

- Step 1: Complete My Personhood Summary©
- Step 2: Consider the 5 Senses
- Step 3: Consult the Meaningful Engagement Resource Guide
- Step 4: Implement and Evaluate
- Step 5: Document

Using this Resource:

Designed for flexible use to suit a variety of care settings and user preferences. Options are:

- Use the digital format (hyperlinks to all activities)
- Print individual activity pages
- Print the entire guide
- Create individual activity kits

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Guidelines for Use - Tip Sheet

Step 1: Complete My Personhood Summary©

Understanding personhood is a cornerstone of person-centred care and ensures that engagement activities are meaningful and relevant. Before using this resource guide, it is recommended to complete the Behavioural Supports Ontario *My Personhood Summary*© tool, in collaboration with the individual and those who know them best (e.g., family members, friends, or long-standing care partners). This tool helps gather key insights about the person's life story, values, preferences, and interests.

Step 2: Consider the 5 Senses

 Vision

 Auditory

 Touch & Feel

 Smell

 Taste

Step 3: Consult the Meaningful Engagement Resource Guide

Using this Resource

This resource is designed for flexible use to suit a variety of care settings and user preferences. It is available in a digital format with a clickable table of contents that allow for easy navigation.

For those who prefer a printed version, there are options to:

- **Print individual activity pages** as needed, based on interest or theme.
- **Print the entire guide** and create an activity binder for easy access.
- **Create individual activity kits** by printing out each activity and assembling all required materials into a labeled bag or bin, along with the printed instructions. These ready-to-go kits can be gathered as a set, creating an organized and easily accessible collection of activities.

Step 4: Implement and Evaluate

While selecting and implementing activities, consider how the effectiveness of the activity will be evaluated for each individual, and which goals are seeking to be achieved. Ongoing evaluation is essential to determine if adjustments are required to ensure activities are meaningful and aligned with the individuals' preferences, abilities, and interests.



Don't be discouraged if the activity doesn't go as planned the first time. Try it again at a different time of day, in another setting, or with modifications to better suit the individual's needs, preferences, and abilities.

Reminder

Step 5: Document

To ensure continuity of care, it is important to document the effectiveness of an activity in alignment with the organization's documentation policy.

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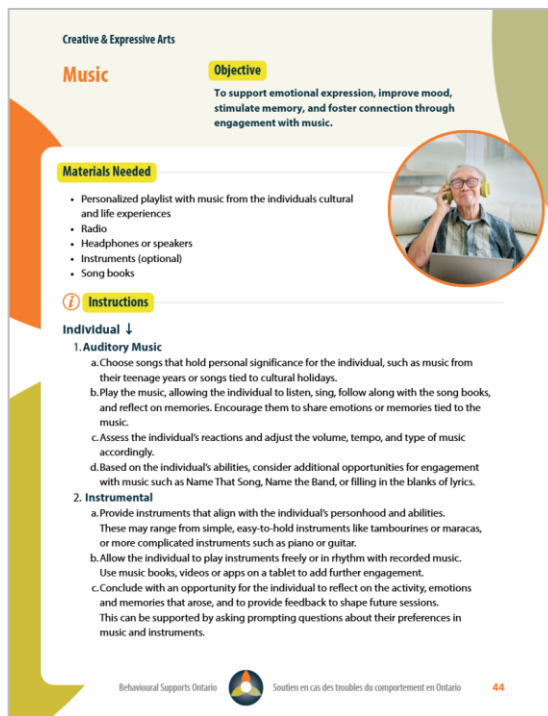
Activity Layout:



Creative & Expressive Arts

Activities that engage creativity and self-expression through hands-on activities and the arts.

Music 44	Visual Art 59
Woodworking 47	1. Ocean Drum 62
Knitting 49	2. Finger Painting 63
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Creative & Expressive Arts

Music

Objective

To support emotional expression, improve mood, stimulate memory, and foster connection through engagement with music.

Materials Needed

- Personalized playlist with music from the individuals' cultural and life experiences
- Radio
- Headphones or speakers
- Instruments (optional)
- Song books

Instructions

Individual ↓

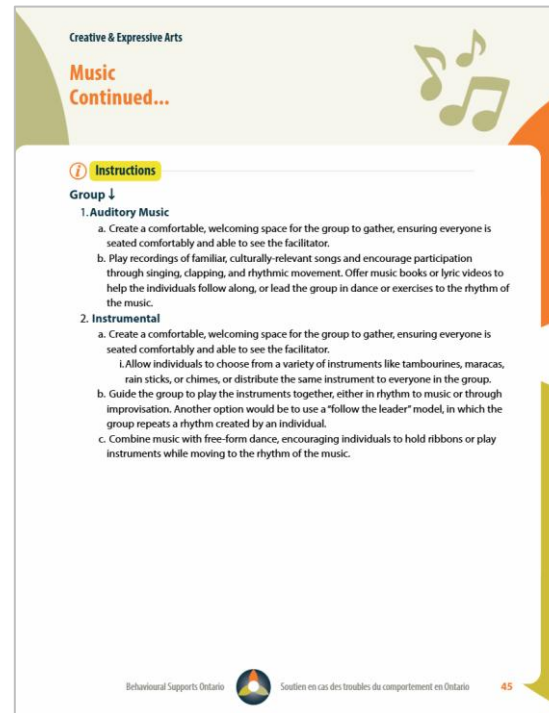
1. Auditory Music

- Choose songs that hold personal significance for the individual, such as music from their teenage years or songs tied to cultural holidays.
- Play the music, allowing the individual to listen, sing, follow along with the song books, and reflect on memories. Encourage them to share emotions or memories tied to the music.
- Assess the individual's reactions and adjust the volume, tempo, and type of music accordingly.
- Based on the individual's abilities, consider additional opportunities for engagement with music such as Name That Song, Name the Band, or filling in the blanks of lyrics.

2. Instrumental

- Provide instruments that align with the individual's personhood and abilities. These may range from simple, easy-to-hold instruments like tambourines or maracas, or more complicated instruments such as piano or guitar.
- Allow the individual to play instruments freely or in rhythm with recorded music. Use music books, videos or apps on a tablet to add further engagement.
- Conclude with an opportunity for the individual to reflect on the activity, emotions and memories that arose, and to provide feedback to shape future sessions. This can be supported by asking prompting questions about their preferences in music and instruments.

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Creative & Expressive Arts

Music Continued...

Instructions

Group ↓

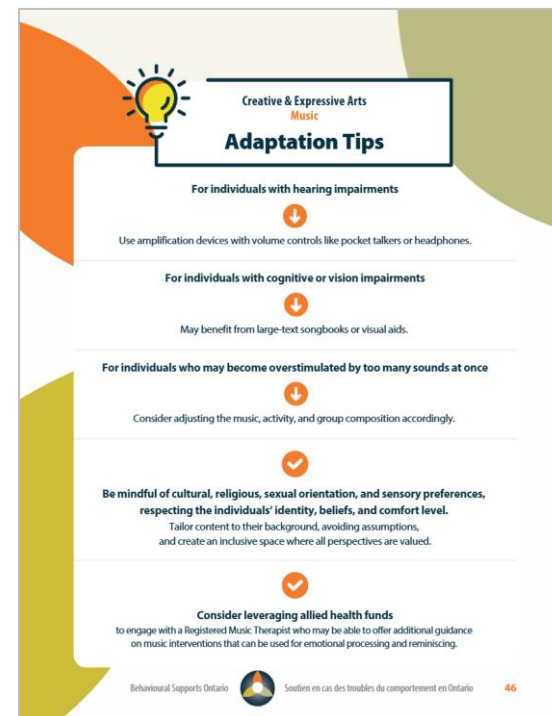
1. Auditory Music

- Create a comfortable, welcoming space for the group to gather, ensuring everyone is seated comfortably and able to see the facilitator.
- Play recordings of familiar, culturally-relevant songs and encourage participation through singing, clapping, and rhythmic movement. Offer music books or lyric videos to help the individuals follow along, or lead the group in dance or exercises to the rhythm of the music.

2. Instrumental

- Create a comfortable, welcoming space for the group to gather, ensuring everyone is seated comfortably and able to see the facilitator.
 - Allow individuals to choose from a variety of instruments like tambourines, maracas, rain sticks, or chimes, or distribute the same instrument to everyone in the group.
- Guide the group to play the instruments together, either in rhythm to music or through improvisation. Another option would be to use a "follow the leader" model, in which the group repeats a rhythm created by an individual.
- Combine music with free-form dance, encouraging individuals to hold ribbons or play instruments while moving to the rhythm of the music.

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Creative & Expressive Arts

Music

Adaptation Tips

For individuals with hearing impairments

Use amplification devices with volume controls like pocket talkers or headphones.

For individuals with cognitive or vision impairments

May benefit from large-text songbooks or visual aids.

For individuals who may become overstimulated by too many sounds at once

Consider adjusting the music, activity, and group composition accordingly.

Be mindful of cultural, religious, sexual orientation, and sensory preferences, respecting the individuals' identity, beliefs, and comfort level.

Tailor content to their background, avoiding assumptions, and create an inclusive space where all perspectives are valued.

Consider leveraging allied health funds

to engage with a Registered Music Therapist who may be able to offer additional guidance on music interventions that can be used for emotional processing and reminiscing.

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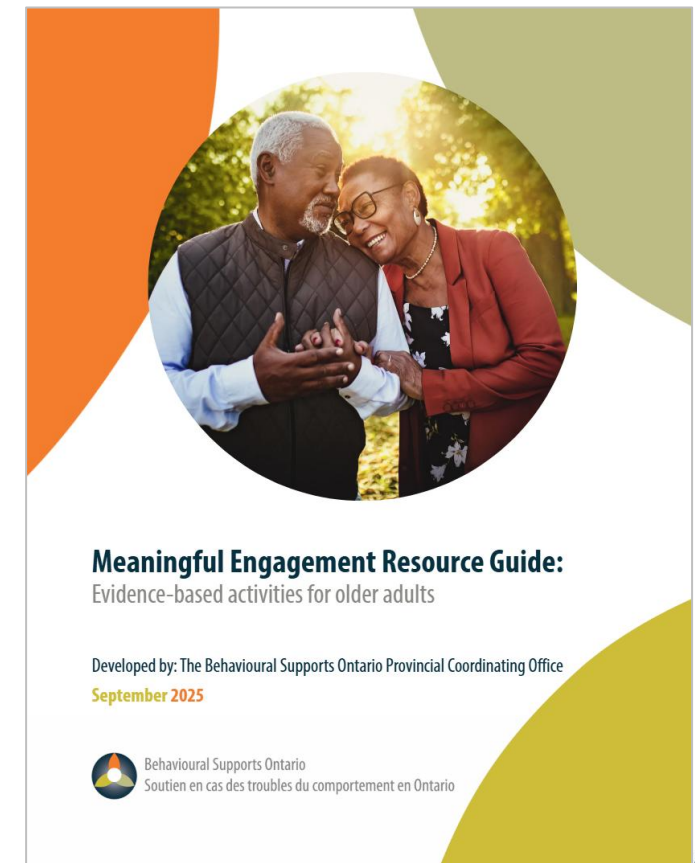


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What does implementation look like for you?

- **Be proactive** – use the guide to plan ahead and save time managing responsive behaviours during your shift.
- **Adapt within your role** – contribute in ways that fit your time, responsibilities, and capacity.
- **Create meaningful moments** – bring stimulation and purpose to residents through small, realistic actions.
- **Know your resources** – consider key champion team member(s) that can review and start the implementation process.
- **Acknowledge** – recognize key team members who have embraced the new approach to engaging older adults, helping to reduce the reliance on less effective methods (such as restraints).
- **Celebrate successes** – highlight the positive outcomes you experience together as a team.
- **Embrace** – encourage these key champions in promoting it's use into practice with colleagues.



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Our Next Steps:



Encourage and support use of the resource guide across care settings by sharing it in collaborative and advisory meetings to broaden reach.



Connect with partners and key collaborators (e.g., team leads, clinical educators) to explore opportunities and plan strategies for integrating the guide into practice.



Promote the guide through social media and newsletters while gathering feedback to inform updates



Create a dissemination package including a slide deck, 1-pager, and email template to support sharing the resource with organizations, leadership, and teams.

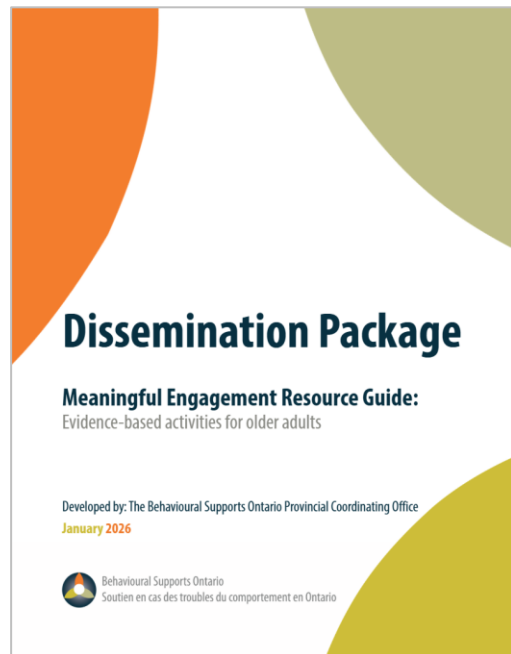


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Dissemination Package:

The goal of this dissemination package is to support everyone in adopting these new resources across all care settings and for all diagnoses.



- 1: A Slide Deck
- 2: 1-pager
- 3: Email Template



In progress – to be released in early 2026



Questions?

Your feedback is important to us.
Please take a moment to share
your thoughts on the *Meaningful
Engagement Resource Guide*.

