



The “**I CAN LIST**” is a technique developed by Natalie B. Davis ACC in 1995 to identify the retained abilities of her father. By identifying the preserved abilities, activities are then created and encouraged which utilize and reinforce those strengths. The list is divided into the following categories: Physical, Cognitive, Communication, Socialization, and Retained habits and skills. Families and staff are encouraged to create their own “**I CAN**” lists.

**The “I CAN” List**  
Assessment of Individual Abilities: Dementia Activities

**Physical: fine and gross motor “Body memories”**

- |                        |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Walk                   | Cut               |
| Throw over & under     | Tear              |
| Sweep                  | Stir              |
| Rake                   | Shake             |
| Dance (identify steps) | Pick and place    |
| Kick                   | Write             |
| Clap                   | Color or paint    |
| Rub                    | Pour              |
| Pat or press, stamp    | Scoop             |
| Fold                   | Imitate movements |

**Cognitive “Long Term–Autobiographical and life period memories”**

- Sort
- Seriate/order
- Comprehend colors
- Match colors
- Match pictures
- Know rhyming words
- Repeat previously learned “memorized materials”
  - Opposites, go-togethers, triplets, clichés,
  - Nursery rhymes, bible passages, states and capitals
  - Math facts
- Read words
- Read sentences, how many?
- Recall historical and geographic information
- Understand letters/alphabet
- Spell
- Focus on a one step task
- Watch a video: no plot

**Communication “Emotional memories”**

- |                                 |                    |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Make a choice between 2 objects | Express a feeling  |
| Show compassion and love        | Express an opinion |
| Express excitement and joy      | Shake hands        |
| Make a yes-no response          | Wave               |
| Appreciate humor/laugh          | Smile              |
| Demonstrate care and nurturing  |                    |
| Express a thought               |                    |

### **Socialization/response to the environment “Social norm memories”**

- Responds to social interactions with others
- Participate appropriately at spectator activity
- Participates appropriately in controlled social settings  
(meals, parties, special events)
- Responds to objects in the environment
  - Birds, flags flying, airplanes, trees, sunsets, rain, weather
- Make gestures of friendship and caring

### **Retained habits and skills, (work and leisure) “music and song memories-procedural habits memories”**

- Demonstrates ability to sing or hum, play instrument
- Listen, moves, dances to music
- Can repeat sound patterns
- Demonstrates retained leisure skill of \_\_\_\_\_.  
needlepoint, cross-stitch, sewing, cooking, sport etc.

### **Sample “I CAN statements”**

- “I can’t remember to fix my coffee or remember to get it...but *I can* stir it when you give it to me”
- “I can’t tell you about my football games, but *I can* throw one when you give it to me”
- “I can’t read a book or a story, but *I can* read a few words and maybe a sentence”
- “I don’t know what day it is, but *I can* say good morning to you”
- “I can’t drive my car anymore, but *I can* read the road signs when we drive together”
- “I can’t tell you about my WWII experiences, but *I can* see “*that thing up there*” and I feel proud (flag)”
- “I can’t follow directions, but *I can* follow you and imitate what you do”
- “I can’t have a garden anymore but, *I can* pick pretty flowers and smell them”
- “I am calmed by singing gospel music, but I need to hear the first lines

### **Or in 3<sup>rd</sup> person**

- Joe responds with pride when he is called Colonel But only in a specific tone of voice
- Maddie is calmed by walking outside BUT she doesn’t remember how to go out
- Frank will get in the car for the Dr. if he has his golf clubs BUT the staff need to “go along”
- Kate relaxes when she is called teacher BUT the staff needs to create the opportunities
- Ted likes to watch the Boston Red Sox BUT he needs help to turn it on and find the game
- Pat is engaged while reading a book BUT she needs to have this task simplified
- Sue will remain focused when she has her clipboard BUT she needs to be cued
- Eunice will sit contently while looking at the garden BUT she needs cueing to look at it
- Ellie transitions to bed by reading the Bible BUT she needs a simplified format and reminding
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