

Caregiving in  
The Comfort of Home®

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Activities to Engage & Entertain

Most caregivers focus on those activities the senior or a person with Alzheimer’s (AD) no longer should do, such as drive, work or go out alone. But, to help maintain good self-esteem, it is also important to help the senior continue to engage in meaningful activities and participate in life. To do this, decide what activities he *can* do and help him adjust for abilities that are lost. **Accentuate the positive.**

Activities should **make the best use of a person’s remaining strengths** and skills and be based on interests and hobbies developed over a lifetime. These include activities like going for walks or gardening, which you can still enjoy together. For a person with Alzheimer’s, meaningful activities can also reduce the risk of agitation or upsetting behaviors.

We all enjoy experiencing things through our **senses**—smelling a flower, watching a sunset or a familiar taste or smell. Some people enjoy touching a smooth piece of wood, stroking a furry animal or placing their hand under running water. The **importance of touch** becomes even more important as AD progresses. Also, when there is no activity he can do, *touch* can become an important part of communication and simply holding hands becomes an activity.

There are many activities that encourage non-verbal (using body language, movement, etc.) **emotional expression**. For example, caring for plants or pets can help the person with AD to express feelings of caring.

He or she will still appreciate signs of affection. Depending on your relationship, holding hands, hugging, brushing hair, rubbing on hand cream or other adult uses of *touch* (acceptable adult expressions of caring and concern) may provide emotional satisfaction to both of you.

Listening to **music and singing** can be both enjoyable and calming. Memory of song lyrics can remain longer than the person’s ability to carry a conversation.

**Activities with children** can bring joy and laughter. It also helps the senior feel they are teaching or helping.

In the early stages, just a reminder or a cue may be enough to get him going, and he may be able to carry on from there.

To keep activities enjoyable—

- ☞ **Establish a routine** that includes a balance of rest and activity.
- ☞ **Recognize limitations.** Parties, trips, concerts may be too stimulating and exhausting.
- ☞ **Adjust the activity** to make it possible for him to participate.

Don’t tell a person with AD about an activity you have planned too far in advance, because this may cause anxiety, not pleasant expectation.



## Finding the Right Activity

An activity doesn't have to be something out of the ordinary. Try modifying regular activities of daily life (ADLs) so that the senior or a person with dementia can still do them. Helping a person bathe is an opportunity to feel water, smell soap, tell a story.

Chores such as dusting, sweeping, doing laundry, preparing food and cooking can be satisfying activities. Even bathing, shaving and getting dressed can provide an opportunity for chatting and reminiscing, singing or telling jokes. Making these everyday ADLs enjoyable can improve cooperation, so you both can enjoy them.

- ✓ Consider ways the person in your care can continue to participate in **activities enjoyed in the past**. If he used to play tennis, but can no longer keep score, try just hitting the ball back and forth.
- ✓ Doing activities or chores that **recall a person's work-related past**.
- ✓ **Try something new**. In spite of AD, people often discover talents they may not have expressed before, such as painting or collage art.
- ✓ Break an activity down into simple steps and that can be completed in a short time.

Be generous with praise, do not criticize or correct mistakes, although you may need to help if the activity becomes too difficult.

Don't get upset if she walks away in the middle of the project. People with AD are easily distracted and fatigued.

*Source: The Comfort of Home for Alzheimer's Disease; The 36-Hour Day*

## Horticultural Therapy

Gardening is one of the oldest healing arts. The goal is to improve mental and physical health and the person's spirits. The benefits are many, such as—

- Exercises eyes and body
- Provides leisure activities when the person can no longer do other activities
- Promotes interest and enthusiasm for the future
- Provides something to talk about
- Encourages a person to walk and bend
- Improves confidence and provides a feeling of being useful
- Allows time to daydream
- Makes it possible to grow useful house plants or vegetables
- Allows a person to be in fresh air and enjoy the soothing sounds of nature

### *To Make Gardening Easier*

Make sure that proper body mechanics (positions) are used. Avoid twisting the body; face in the direction of the work being done, and lift using the strength of the upper body and legs. A weightlifter's belt can provide back support.

## Taking Care of Yourself— Have Fun!

There's no age limit on the enjoyment of playing games. Games relieve boredom and stress. They also help exercise our brains. Playing certain games might benefit mood, memory, concentration, reasoning, and imagination. Games might be especially helpful for your brain if they require you to learn something new.

Many games can be played and completed in less than 30 minutes for those with limited attention spans. For people with vision problems, find games with large type. Card games such as Gin Rummy, Spades or Canasta are enjoyable.

Source: "<https://www.greatseniorliving.com/articles/fun-activities-for-seniors>" Fun Activities for Seniors: Over 100 Ways to Play



## Live Life Laughing!

The procedure will only take a few minutes, but you'll probably talk about it for hours.



### Inspiration

*If I cannot do great things,  
I can do small things  
in a great way.  
— Martin Luther King, Jr.*

### Memory Care - Monitor TV

Some people with AD get very upset watching violence on TV because they think it is real. Careful TV monitoring is important.

Caregiving in  
The Comfort of Home®

**Our Purpose**

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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## SAFETY TIPS— Limitations and Solutions

Limitation	Tip
Poor memory	Focus on the present. "Today is a sunny day," rather than "Do you remember that winter snowstorm?"
Talking about the past	Use this opportunity to learn about the past (as the person currently remembers it).
Difficulty with orientation to time and place	Provide cues such as pictures of a toilet on the bathroom door or a spoon glued to the kitchen door to help the person find his way around the house.
Doesn't understand what to do	Simplify the instructions and speak slowly. <i>Show</i> how to do it.
Not paying attention	Perhaps he is tired, or the activity is not interesting, too difficult, or confusing; try at a later time.
The activity does not get done	Do not focus on the product. Keep reminding yourself it is not important.
The senior does it wrong	Keep your sense of humor!

NEXT ISSUE...PREVENTING CAREGIVER INJURIES—BACK SAFETY

# Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

## Q U I C K Q U I Z

It is important for you to set up a plan for day-to-day activities that can stimulate and entertain. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Some people with AD get very upset watching violence on TV because they think it is real.  
T F
2. To help maintain self-esteem, it is important to help the person with AD continue to engage in activities and participate in family and community life.  
T F
3. Activities should make the best use of a person's remaining strengths and skills.  
T F
4. Often when there is no activity he or she can do, *touch* can become an important part of communication.  
T F
5. Seniors, and even people with Alzheimer's, can discover new talents.  
T F
6. Gardening is one of the oldest healing arts and exercises the eyes and the body.  
T F
7. There's no age limit on the enjoyment of playing games. Games relieve boredom and stress. They also help exercise our brains.  
T F
8. Generally, parties, trips, concerts are *not* too stimulating and exhausting.  
T F
9. Memory of song lyrics can remain longer than the ability to carry a conversation.  
T F
10. An activity doesn't have to be something out of the ordinary and even activities of daily living (ADLs) can become an opportunity to use senses or tell a story.  
T F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_