

Living with Dementia

Ideas & Activities for Visits

Choosing an appropriate activity for a visit with the person living with dementia requires advance planning. The challenge is in finding an activity that is interesting and engaging, yet does not cause frustration or distress for the individual.

1. When selecting an activity, **consider your loved one's**: interests, likes and dislikes; physical and mental capabilities; capacity for interacting with others; attention span and level of motivation; potential triggers for dementia-related behaviors.
 2. Be sure to choose the **time of day** when the person is the most alert and responsive. Be sure not to over-stimulate or tire the person.
 3. **Be flexible**. If the activity does not appear to be enjoyable, be prepared to adapt it, take a break, or discontinue it.
 4. Be sure to include activities that involve **sensory stimulation** such as petting animals (real or stuffed) or touching soft fleece; pleasant aromas, such as vanilla or citrus; music; looking at flowers or art; etc.
 5. **Focus on the process** rather than the results. The goal is to enjoy the time spent together.
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ACTIVITIES

Following is a list of suggestions for engaging the person living with dementia. Not every activity is suitable for your loved one (see #1 above). Be sure to share with others what works.

Arts and Crafts

Bring supplies for simple knitting or sewing projects; roll up yarn into balls.

Paint or draw with finger paints, watercolors, or markers.

Bring adult coloring books (be sure pictures are large; use jumbo crayons and/or markers)

Doodle on white boards with erasable markers (try Mr. Sketch scented markers).

Arrange flowers (instead of bringing an arrangement, bring loose flowers so the person can arrange them him/herself).

Decorate holiday cookies.

Create simple items with molding clay.

For more ideas: Browse craft and toy stores for activities and simple craft kits.

Music

Listen to music. (Use Pandora or Spotify on phone, tablet, or laptop for unlimited options.)

Sing.

Play instruments.

Share a musical greeting card.

Read

- Read favorite books – read to person, or have person to read to you if able.
- Browse through magazines and catalogs.
- Read spiritual passages or sing hymns if this is something the person enjoys.

Reminisce

- Share photos or scrapbooks (if the person is distressed because s/he doesn't recognize family members, you may want to adjust this activity).
- Create a customized scrapbook for the individual on online scrapbooking sites.
- Look at photos on computer, laptop, or tablet. Access events from the person's past.
- Flip through old high school or college yearbooks (many of these are online).
- Browse through vintage catalogs, such as Sears, or old clothing pattern books.
- Share items from favorite sports or hobbies – baseball cards, gloves; sewing items; etc.
- Watch family videos/DVDs.

☐☐ Visit www.StoryWorth.com – an online site for sharing family memories.

Games

- Cards: Play simple games such as War or Blackjack, or just arrange and sort cards.
- Play favorite board games such as checkers; do word searches or simple crossword puzzles.
- Play Tic Tac Toe on a white board.
- Play Bingo – this works well if you have a small group.
- Beanbag toss.
- Dominoes: Play a game or sort and stack the Dominoes.
- Put together puzzles that are adult appropriate and not too small.
- NOTE: Many games and activities can be accessed online.

Household Tasks

- Cook or prepare simple snacks to share.
- Fold laundry.
- Sort magazines, photos, greeting cards, etc.

Pampering

- Manicures for women (family member can do this or accompany to a nail salon).
- Provide lotion massage for hands.
- Accompany to hair salon or barber shop.
- Go "virtual" shopping online.

Outdoors

- Take a short walk or go for a wheelchair stroll.
- Sit in the garden and enjoy the flowers and birds.
- Sit in the park and people-watch.
- Sit under an awning on a rainy day.
- Engage in simple gardening activities such as planting, pruning, sweeping, pulling weeds
-raised flower/vegetable beds are perfect for those who have mobility limitations.
- Blow bubbles.

Pets

- Bring a pet for the person to enjoy. If you don't have an animal, ask the local Humane Society if they have individuals with therapy pets available for visits. A stuffed animal is a good alternative; a robotic companionship pet would be even better!