

Activity Programming

When providing dementia care, we must redefine our idea of an "activity program." Organized activities like bingo and collage making are only one way to provide meaningful activities.

I. Types of Activities

A. Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

1. Normal daily routines take up a large part of the day for all of us. These activities are purposeful and familiar to the person with dementia.
2. Dressing, grooming, and eating are important activities.

A. Socialization

1. Visiting with family, reminiscing with others, and participating in a group activity helps to meet social needs.

C. Work-related Tasks

1. Humans have a need to be useful.
2. Give the person an opportunity to feel pride and a familiar sense of accomplishment.

D. Quiet Time

1. Quiet time is also a normal part of daily life.
2. We must provide our clients free time; an enjoyable place to look out the window, watch birds, or simply take a nap.

I. A Quality Activities Program is one that:

A. Is failure-free

1. Activities must offer opportunities for success.

B. Is Individualized

1. An assessment of each person for abilities, interests and past experiences is important. (For example, invite the person that was a hostess to greet people and handout nametags at the ice cream social.)
2. Social status and gender are important considerations. (Can we expect a former bank manager to enjoy making tissue flowers?)

C. Has a Purpose

1. Some programs make arts and crafts more interesting to reluctant participants by having a specific purpose for the finished work, like decorating cards for a staff member's new baby.
2. Useful activities such as shelling peas or shucking corn may be more rewarding than "busy work."

D. Grouped carefully

1. Limit group size.
 - a. Group size should be small, usually 3-4 people is ideal.
2. Organize groups according to ability levels when possible.
 - a. Break down groups according to the severity of the dementia.
 - b. Do NOT place individuals that are cognitively aware with dementia residents.
 - c. When groups can't be segregated there are ways to ensure that all participants benefit from an activity.
 - Separate activities into steps.
 - Universally enjoyable activities like music and pets bring pleasure to individuals with varied abilities.

E. Appeals to Adult Interest

1. Avoid childlike activities.
2. Exceptions may occur.
 - a. Dementia in its later stages, may cause a person to derive pleasure from rocking a doll or looking at picture books.

B. Makes Use of Former Abilities & Interests

1. Importance is of essence to get a thorough assessment of the individual's likes, dislikes, abilities, and interests.

C. Is Flexible

1. Example: There is no right way to fold laundry or sand wood.

D. Is Repetitive

1. Mastery comes from repetition.
2. Repetitive tasks can give the person a sense of accomplishment.

I. Is a Team Effort

1. Everyone who comes in contact with the person is part of the activity team. The social worker asking, "Can you help me move these cups to the table?" creates a meaningful social activity.

III. Planning for success**A. Scheduling**

1. Schedules offer security to a person with dementia but should allow for individual needs and flexibility.
2. Schedules with limited number of words and large print can be posted in several places for less severely impaired residents. A clock and calendar posted near the schedule is helpful.
3. A consistent morning routine might include a walking exercise program at the same time everyday, followed by coffee and juice.
4. Every afternoon should include a snack time with the clients participating in the preparation.
5. Late afternoons are often difficult times. Walks outdoors, active games, and dining room preparations can be very helpful at these times.
6. Activities should continue after dinner. Piano music, TV game shows, or a movie classic are just a few ideas.

B. Availability

1. Appropriate activities must be available at all times of the day or night.
2. A rolling cart filled with interesting objects can provide instant activity when needed. Separate drawers can hold scarves to fold or fondle, artificial flowers to arrange, bolts to separate, playing cards to stack or sort. The possibilities are endless.
3. A person can routinely become agitated at nightfall. A soothing one-to-one activity like sipping warm milk in a quiet place might be helpful.

B. Distractions

1. Activity rooms should be free from distractions.
2. Avoid playing music during organized games or discussions.

D. Duration

1. Organized activities must be short.
2. 20-30 minutes is usually maximum.

IV. When a person resists**A. NO can mean many things.**

1. I can't.
2. I'm afraid.
3. I don't understand.
4. I never liked it and I never will.

B. Offering lots of reasons why he should, probably won't convince him.

1. Asking for his help may encourage his participation.
2. Starting an activity within view of a group of people will often act as a magnet for the curious.

V. Activity suggestions**A. Music & Dance**

1. Music is the universal language. Music remains a meaningful activity for many individuals after communication has been lost.
2. Sing-a-longs are often the most popular activity programs.
3. Many recordings of popular music from the first half of the century are available. Assess what type of music the individual used to enjoy.
4. Ethnic music is an excellent way to provide familiar activity for ethnic minority clients. There may be a family member or staff member willing to assist with musical program from their cultural background.
5. Videos of old musicals or Lawrence Welk Show can provide pleasant entertainment for many older people.

B. Domestic Chores and Work-Related Tasks

1. Clients can cut fruit, spread small peanut butter sandwiches, arrange cheese and crackers on a plate, and share in the clean up afterwards.
2. Sweeping the sidewalk in an enclosed garden area is another possibility.

C. Reminiscing

1. For the person with dementia whose life is becoming unfamiliar and filled with losses, there are benefits of recalling a more pleasant time of life.
2. One-to-one or small group discussions can center on themes like jobs, families, or travel.
 - a. Allow plenty of time for individuals to respond.
 - b. Should a topic seem upsetting, acknowledge that it might be difficult and have another idea ready.
 - c. Props for reminiscing.
 - Memory box filled with button hooks, small tools, ladies gloves, hats etc.
 - Old catalogs. (Sears, Montgomery Ward)
 - Photos of old cars, planes and houses.
 - Old-time radio shows.

D. Possible topics

1. Asking questions can be too demanding for some persons with dementia. Instead, try more open-ended phrases like "tell me about...."
 - a. Your wedding.
 - b. Your best friend.
 - c. Animals you like.
 - d. Your favorite season.
 - e. Your school days.
 - f. Places you've traveled.

E. Shopping

1. Shopping can be very comforting well into the illness.

2. Staff members can escort residents to the gift shop for a short shopping trip. Another option is to turn a closet into a "store" with small items like Kleenex, LifeSavers, etc. When the "store" is open, residents can bring their wallets and purses with small amounts of money and buy whatever they fancy.
3. Shopping trips in public areas can be overwhelming for a confused person. Shopping will be the most successful if treated as an outing, rather than trying to get through a long shopping list.

A. Physical Activities

1. Dancing
 - a. Line dances, circle dances, and wheelchair dancing can be fun for everyone. One residential care facility held dance lessons at the "ballet bar" along the hallways.
2. Group exercises
 - a. Daily exercise will improve strength and balance and may help prevent falls.
 - b. Most exercises can be adapted for participants in wheelchairs.
3. Sports and games
 - a. Floor bowling.
 - b. Bean bag toss.
 - c. Hallway golf.
 - d. Indoor horseshoes.
4. Gardening and yard work
 - a. Raking leaves.
 - b. Weeding.
 - c. Digging.
 - d. Planting seeds.
 - e. Watering.
5. Walking, walking, walking
 - a. Indoors or out.
 - b. Marching may be fun for some.
 - c. Enlist the help of family and visitors if the client enjoys longer walks.

Alzheimer's Activity Resources

The Alzheimer's Store
www.alzstore.com

Books available on Amazon:

Movement With Meaning
By Barbara Larsen

The Best Friends Book of Alzheimer's Activities
By Virginia Bell, David Troxel, Tonya Cox, Robin Hamon

Sunshine & Joy's Big Book of Alzheimer's Activities
By Jill Hernandez

Sunshine and Joy's

BIG BOOK OF ALZHEIMER'S ACTIVITIES

*A Treasury
of Armchair Activities
to Spark the Mind*

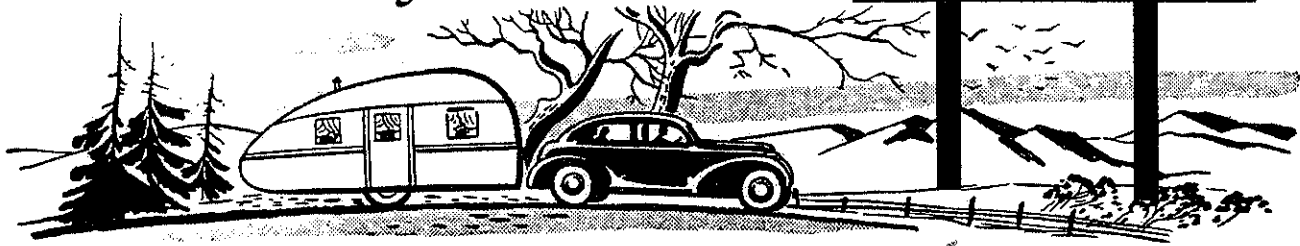
Hundreds of things
Familiar and fun,
Sunshine and Joy
Has rolled into one.
Dream of the future,
Ponder the past,
Get ready for laughter,
Sit back and relax!



Road Trip

WASHINGTON

5 Miles →



1. Did you know that Washington was named after George Washington?
2. Is Washington the only state named after a United States president? (Yes)
3. Does Washington have a volcano called Mount St. Helens? (Yes. It erupted in 1980.)
4. Two explorers arrived in Washington in 1805. Their names were Lewis and _____ (Clark).
5. Washington's state gem is petrified _____ (wood).
6. Game show host Bob Barker was born in Washington. He is famous for hosting a show called "*The Price is _____ (Right).*"
7. Did you know that the largest dam in the United States is in Washington? It's called the Grand Coulee Dam.
8. Does Washington produce more apples than any other state? (Yes)

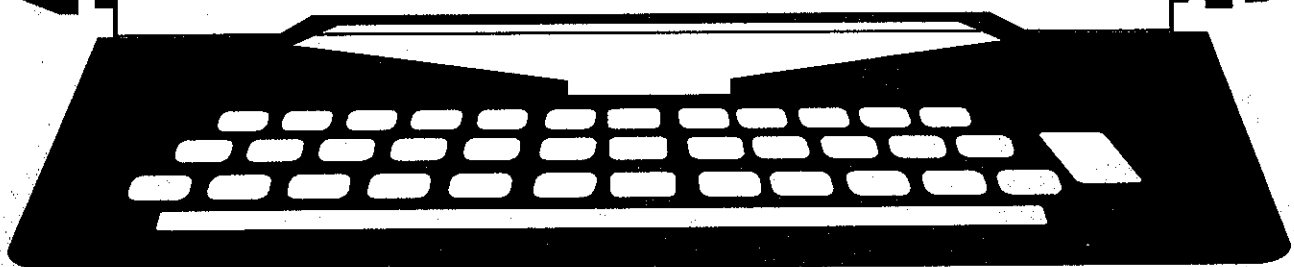
Famous Quotes

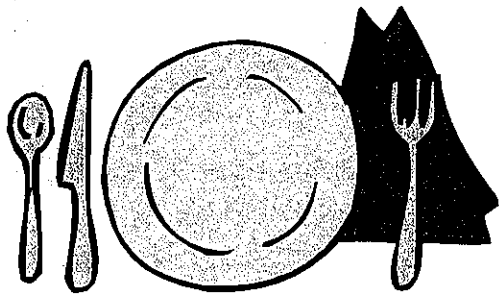
After one look at this planet, any visitor from outer space would say "I want to see the manager." --William Burroughs

Housework can't kill you, but why take a chance? -- Phyllis Diller

A vacation is what you take when you can no longer take what you've been taking. -- Earl Wilson

I grew up with six brothers. That's how I learned to dance - waiting for the bathroom. -- Bob Hope





All About Me

Let's Eat

1. When you go out to eat, would you rather have fast food or dine in an expensive restaurant?
2. What is your favorite restaurant? Why is it your favorite?
3. If a restaurant parking lot is full, does it mean the food is good?
4. Do you like Chinese food? Can you eat with chopsticks? Do you look forward to getting a fortune cookie at the end of a meal?
5. Do you like pizza? What are your favorite pizza toppings?
6. Do you like Italian food? Which tastes better, lasagna or spaghetti? Do you like to roll spaghetti noodles on your fork or do you like to slurp them?
7. Are you a vegetarian?
8. Do you like Greek food? Did you ever break any plates after a Greek meal?
9. Do you like to eat bratwurst and sauerkraut?
10. Do you like salads? Do you think green salads are just "rabbit food"?
11. Do you like hamburgers and French fries?
12. Do you like your hamburgers plain or with "the works"?
13. Do you like Mexican food? Do you like hot sauce?
14. Have you ever been to a Japanese restaurant? Did you have to take your shoes off and sit on the floor?
15. Do you like to go to a good steak house? How do you like your steak: well done, medium, or rare?
16. Do you like seafood? Do you like lobster and crab?
17. Do you like to eat at the deli? What do you order there?
18. Do you like going out for ice cream or a snow cone?
19. Have you ever eaten so much at a restaurant that you had to undo a button or loosen your belt?



147 fun, easy, and enriching activities!

The *Best Friends* Book of
**Alzheimer's
Activities**

Volume One

Virginia Bell
David Troxel
Tonya Cox
Robin Hamon



On the Road Again

Vacations hold special memories whether we took them as children with our parents or later in life. Because vacations are often full of unusual and sometimes even dramatic experiences, persons with dementia may recall some aspects of their vacations.

The Basics

Before Class: Collect information and trivia about vacations and travel. Internet keywords include: travel, vacation, or a specific city such as Miami or Honolulu.

Also collect old postcards from different places, travel brochures, maps, globes, or some vacation items: camera, book, clothes, passport, and sunglasses. Provide a flip chart and markers.

At Class Time: Pass around photos and postcards of vacation destinations. Reminisce about past vacations. Play a game of places to visit, asking questions such as "Where am I if I am going to a luau?" or "Where am I if I am looking out from the top of the Empire State Building?" List on a flip chart places that class participants have been for a vacation. Talk about places they would like to visit. Share other fun facts or trivia about travel.

Variation: Take a fantasy trip across the United States displaying road maps, discussing various cities, regional attractions, local foods, and more along the way.

The Best Friends Way

Life Story: Learn about favorite vacation spots or travel destinations of the members of your group. Who in your group has been a big traveler? Do members of your group have interesting childhood vacation memories?

The Arts: Make a collage using postcards (see page ??) Read Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Less Traveled."

Humor: Talk about funny mishaps, "When I got off the airplane, I discovered I had been booked to Portland, Maine and not Portland, Oregon!"

Music: Sing songs about different places such as: "Carolina in the Morning," "Deep in the Heart of Texas," "California Here I Come," or "My Old Kentucky Home."

Sensory: Looking at pictures and postcards from vacation can remind persons of the sights and sounds of faraway places.

Conversation: Discover memories from the past, "Clyde, how did you travel to vacation spots: by car or by plane?" or "What was it like to fly across the country in the 1950s?" Ask for advice, "What are the essentials to pack when going on vacation?" Debate, "Is it better to relax during a vacation or see as much as you can?" Dream, "Jenny, if you could take a vacation anywhere, where would you go?"

The Basics

Before Class: Collect information and trivia about farming and agriculture. Internet keywords include: farm life, farmhouse, milking cows.

Also collect items related to farming: an old milk bucket, a butter churn, an egg basket, farm tools, pictures of farm life, a *Farmer's Almanac*, and fresh vegetables.

At Class Time: Pass around the items and talk about each one. Offer trivia questions. Discuss life experiences related to farming. Read passages from the *Farmer's Almanac* and debate and discuss. Taste fresh vegetables such as a tomato or cucumber.

Variations: Celebrate intergenerational activities by inviting the Future Farmers of America to come and visit the class to discuss their program and activities.

Living "Down on the Farm"

Farm life was a way of living for many people. This class discussion allows persons with dementia who grew up on farms or lived in rural settings to share their experiences. For the rest of us, it's an opportunity to experience a slice of life that is slowly disappearing from many countries.

The Best Friends Way

Life Story: Review life stories to see which persons lived on farms. Who had a favorite relative who lived on a farm? What chores was a person responsible for?

The Arts: Create a farm-themed word game.

Humor: Joke about using an outhouse or the silly things farm animals can do.

Music: Listen to recordings of "Shine On Harvest Moon" or "Green Acres."

Old Sayings: "Planting by the light of the moon." "You reap what you sow."

Sensory: Look at an old milk bucket. Feel the cold metal, knock on the bucket to hear its sound. Feel the texture of the egg basket. Enjoy the smell, taste, and feel of fresh vegetables.

Spirituality: Discuss the cycles of growth and harvest, which are symbolic of life. Talk about how being productive and sharing your produce with others is spiritually rewarding.

Conversation: Reminisce, "What time did you wake up on the farm? Did a rooster crow to wake you up? What crops did you grow?" While looking at the farm tools ask, "Paul, what do you do with this tool?" Recall together, "When does the harvest moon take place? Did you ever milk a cow, gather eggs, or feed the pigs? How do you milk a cow? How many eggs does a chicken lay each week? Did you follow the *Farmer's Almanac*? What types of information and advice does it provide?"