

# Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS"

## Activities in Alzheimer's Care

The work we do and the activities we choose for fun tell the world a lot about us. But people with Alzheimer's disease (AD) and dementia lose, little by little over time, the ability to do those things that make them who they are.

Most caregivers focus on those activities the person with AD no longer should do, such as drive, work, go out alone or make important decisions. But, to help maintain good self-esteem, it is also important to help the person with AD continue to engage in meaningful activities and participate in family and community 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. Meaningful activities can also reduce the risk of agitation or upsetting behaviors. A person with AD and/or dementia has difficulty planning and choosing activities. 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, follow these tips:

- **Establish a routine** that includes a balance of rest and activity.

- **Recognize limitations.** Long trips, three-act plays or a seat in the balcony far from the restroom are going to cause trouble.

- **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.

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

### Finding an Activity

An activity doesn't have to be something out of the ordinary. Try modifying regular activities of daily life (ADLs) so that the person with dementia can still do them.

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 necessary ADLs enjoyable will probably improve cooperation, so you both can enjoy them.



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## Make Activities More Fun

- ☺ Consider ways the care receiver can continue to participate in activities he enjoyed in the past: If he used to play tennis, but can no longer keep score, how about just hitting the ball back and forth? If she enjoyed cooking, why not make a meal together?
- ☺ Don't be afraid to try something new. As people age, their interests may change. In spite of AD or sometimes because of it, people often discover talents they may not have expressed before, such as painting, collage or even a greater sense of spirituality.
- ☺ Doing activities or chores that recall a person's work-related past can bring much happiness.
- ☺ Break an activity down into simple steps.
- ☺ Choose an activity that can be completed in a relatively short time. The process is more important than the product: It may be just as much fun to make mashed potatoes as a perfect soufflé.
- ☺ Be generous with praise, do not criticize or correct mistakes, although you may want to lend a hand if some aspect of the activity becomes too difficult or time-consuming.
- ☺ Don't get upset if she walks away in the middle of the project. People with AD are easily distracted and fatigued.
- ☺ Keep your sense of humor. Alzheimer's is not funny, but amusing things do happen.

Source: *The Comfort of Home for Alzheimer's Disease*

### Alzheimer's Limitations and Tips

Problem	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.
Doesn't understand what to do	Simplify the instructions and speak slowly. Show what is to be done.
Not paying attention	Perhaps he is tired, or the activity is not interesting, too difficult, or confusing; try at a later time.
The job does not get done	Do not focus on the product.
The person with AD does it wrong	Keep your sense of humor!

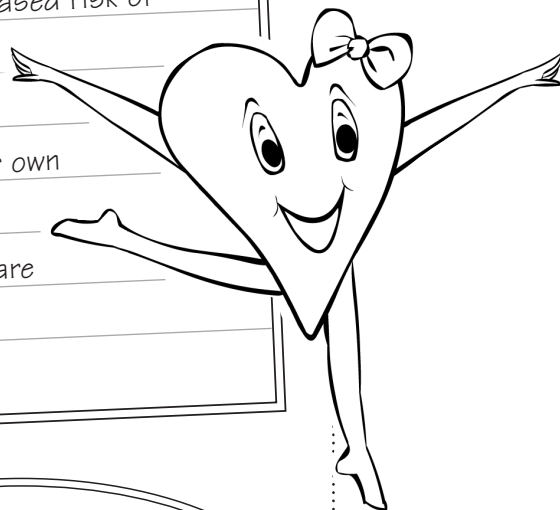
## Taking Care of Yourself— Depression in Heart Disease

People with heart failure and their caregivers have depression at much higher rates than the general public. Both the caregiver and the person in her care need to be aware of mood changes in themselves and each other. One important reason to treat depression is that it is associated with increased risk of cardiovascular disease. This affects both you and the person in your care. Fortunately, depression responds well to treatment.

It can be difficult to talk about depression, either about your own depressed feelings or the feelings of the person in your care.

Nonetheless, it is important to have that talk with a health care provider and discuss a treatment plan.

Source: *The Comfort of Home for Chronic Heart Failure*



## Inspiration

*The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook.*

—William James

## Live Life Laughing!

You think things are bad now?  
In 20 years our country will be  
run by people home-schooled by  
day drinkers.



## Memory Care - Making Art

Some people enjoy making simple pottery out of clay or homemade flour dough. Try cutting shapes from the dough with cookie cutters. Stamps made with a stamp pad produce instant art, and can be an enjoyable repetitive activity. Keep in mind the capabilities of the person in your care and offer gentle encouragement.

## 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— More Light Helps

As people age, less light reaches the back of their eyes where they sense color and motion. Using 100-watt bulbs or higher makes things easier to see. (Don't use bulbs that exceed the wattage rating on lamps and lighting fixtures, since this can present a fire hazard.) Put night-lights in the bedroom, bathroom, and hallways.

Ask your doctor for a referral to an occupational therapist who can help you devise other ways to prevent falls. Some solutions are easily installed and relatively cheap. Others may require professional help and more of an investment. If the plan is to stay in the home for many more years, an investment in safety and fall prevention may make that possible.

Note, a person with Alzheimer's disease should have regular eye examinations because poor vision can contribute to confusion. These exams can also spot or detect other serious diseases, such as diabetes. Finding and treating symptoms early can prevent serious diseases from getting worse and leading to blindness. Tell the doctor of any medicines taken and also tell the doctor if there is a family history of glaucoma.

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“ 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

Like anyone else, people with Alzheimer's disease (AD) are more likely to feel good about themselves if they engage in activities that stimulate and satisfy them. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Activities should make the best use of a person's remaining strengths and skills.  
T F
2. To help maintain good self-esteem, it is also important to help the person with AD to engage in meaningful activities and participate in family and community life.  
T F
3. People with AD usually do not get distracted and fatigued.  
T F
4. Some people with AD get very upset watching violence on TV because they think it is real. Careful TV monitoring is important.  
T F
5. ADLs such as bathing, shaving and getting dressed can provide an opportunity for chatting and reminiscing, singing or telling jokes and be enjoyable activities.  
T F
6. Be generous with praise, do not criticize or correct mistakes, although you may want to lend a hand if some aspect of the activity becomes too difficult.  
T F
7. If the person is not paying attention, perhaps he is tired, or the activity is not interesting, too difficult, or confusing; try at a later time.  
T F
8. Cues such as pictures of a toilet on the bathroom door or a spoon glued to the kitchen door, *do not* help the person find his way around the house.  
T F
9. As people age, their interests may change and, in spite of AD or sometimes because of it, people often discover talents they may not have expressed before.  
T F
10. To help with a poor memory, focus on the present: “Today is a sunny day,” rather than “Do you remember that winter snowstorm?”  
T F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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