



How to Accomplish Engaging Activities for Those with Alzheimer's

By Todd A. Shetter, Chief Operating Officer of ActivCare Living

Caring for someone with Alzheimer's or related dementia can be stressful. Not only does the caregiver worry about health issues, but concerns about social engagement and proper fitness also arise. Fears of negative behavior caused by overstimulation or foreign environments sometimes limit the variety of activities, leaving a caregiver with the added challenge of keeping someone with memory loss active and exercising their strengths and abilities.

At ActivCare, we have been caring for those with memory loss for more than 25 years. One element of our success is a varied and engaging activity program. To maintain the highest functioning level, a daily routine is prepared to exercise residents' minds and bodies. From our years of experience, we have discovered some practices for keeping those with dementia active.

Firstly, adjust your approach to incorporate the following:

Prepare for success. Everyone wants to feel successful and achieve a goal. Create a comfortable environment with the right prompts and cues. Avoid locations with excessive noise and space limitations which can lead to agitation.

Keep it simple. Provide single-step directions for activities. Once each step is comprehended, then address the next step.

Be safe. Ensure proper supervision, setting and materials.

Plan ahead. Prepare a daily schedule of varied physical, passive and resting activities and post it in writing. Choose the time of day best suited to the person's most active time period.

Secondly, appreciate the benefits of ordinary activities on triggering different parts of the brain. Think about the physical benefits of an activity; how it uses different muscle groups; how it exercises hand-and-eye coordination; and how it uses all the senses. For cognitive games, take advantage of the opportunity for someone to sequence different

steps; to socialize and communicate; and observe the confidence that someone feels when getting a correct answer.

Thirdly, appeal to one's interests. The right activities ensure completion and garner self-esteem. Consider what the person with dementia likes to do and create appropriate activities that appeal to those interests. Here are a few suggestions:

Exercise – Take a walk around the block and stop to smell the flowers.
Participate in chair yoga exercises and deep breathing.

Music – Listen to a favorite album and discuss memories created by the songs.
Create your own music together.

Socialize – Visit with a pet, friends or invite the grandchildren over to prepare a craft. Senior centers, neighbors and family are great sources for involving others.

Daily Tasks – Feeling needed is essential. Invite those with memory loss to help with household chores such as folding laundry, making shopping lists or mixing recipes. Although the tasks may be simple, the individual contribution can lead to feelings of accomplishment.

Brain Games – Use crossword puzzles, memory games or jigsaw puzzles to aid with cognition. Be sure that completion of these tasks is not the ultimate goal, but rather the act of engagement and measured success.

Whatever you decide to do together, remember, perfection is not the object, it's the journey that is important – the connection between you and your loved one.

About ActiCare

For more than 30 years, ActiCare has led the industry in providing personalized memory care and enhancing life for its residents. ActiCare's purpose-built assisted living communities offer engaging activity programs, experienced staff, and compassionate care to meet the unique needs of those with Alzheimer's or related dementia. Our specialized communities serve Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego counties in Southern California. Our portfolio continues to grow, and new locations are slated to open throughout the region. For more information about ActiCare Living and its communities, please visit activcareliving.com or call (888) MEM-LOSS.