

Selecting Activities

The symptoms of Alzheimer's disease or another dementia can make participating in leisure activities increasingly difficult for the person with the disease.

Leisure is a basic human need, like food, shelter, friendship and belonging. For the person with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia, an activity can be anything that keeps that person involved in the world around him/her.

In choosing activities, it helps to get acquainted with the person's past and present interests. Adapting previously enjoyed activities can be fun. For example, if a person has always liked gardening, try:

- planting seeds indoors in early spring
- painting a clay pot
- looking at a gardening magazine
- discussing favourite plants

Break Tasks into Easy Steps

- Allow plenty of time.
- Repetition is usually beneficial.
- Focus on the process, not the product.

Reduce Distractions

- Assemble all the supplies you need within reach.
- Turn off the radio and TV.
- Clear any clutter from the activity area.
- Ensure there is adequate lighting.

Be Flexible

- Have a few options available in case the person is not interested in the planned activity.
- If the activity is making the person anxious or irritable, take a break and change the activity, or consider trying again another day.
- Try the same activity at different times of the day. The person may respond better in the morning, afternoon or evening. Your own mood is important and is communicated through your words, tone of voice and body language.
- Eye contact, a smile, a nod or a gentle touch can offer important reassurance.

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Stimulate the Senses

- Use objects or items that stimulate the five senses.
- Benefits include increased socialization, increased concentration, improved self-concept and increased alertness.

Suggestions for Activities:

Household Tasks

- raking leaves, sweeping, mopping
- folding laundry, dusting, vacuuming
- sorting and rolling coins
- peeling vegetables, cleaning out a pumpkin, shucking peas, husking corn, snapping beans

Creative Arts

- painting, rubber stamps, clay
- knitting, crocheting
- modeling, woodworking
- scrapbooking: press flowers & leaves or cut pictures from magazines

Horticulture

- planting seeds or bulbs
- creating small terrariums in glass jars or old fish bowls
- dry flower arranging
- deadheading plants

Movement & Exercise

- standing in place: stretching, marching, clapping
- seated: leg lifts, toe tapping
- hand exercises: make and release fist, finger stretching
- dance

Reminiscence

- arranging photos of family members and friends
- discussing life events: jobs, holidays
- arranging a viewing of home movies and serve popcorn
- sing-alongs: use themes – seasons, holidays, places, names and decades

The Alzheimer Society of Manitoba's mission is to alleviate the individual, family and social consequences of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders while supporting the search for a cure.

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