



MEET ME IN MEMORY CARE



MEANINGFUL MOMENTS AND
ENGAGING ACTIVITIES

*Dedicated to our residents,
past, present and future . . .*

*We honor their individuality
and celebrate their stories.*



Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 5
Selecting Appropriate Activities	
One Size Does Not Fit All.....	Page 7
Activities and Their Benefits	Page 8
Examples	Page 9
Tips	Page 11
Examples	Page 12
Suggested Readings.....	Page 13



Introduction




Connections cannot be overstated in the overall well-being of someone suffering from Alzheimer's Disease or a related dementia. Whether visiting your loved one in a memory care community or providing care at home, it's important to spend meaningful time together.

Getting involved and sharing in programs and activities can help improve quality of life (*for both of you!*) and could help to manage behavior changes that often accompany the disease, such as aggression or sleep problems.

A diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease or other dementia doesn't necessarily mean having to give up favorite activities. Oftentimes, activities can be modified to the person's ability.

It is not unusual for a person in early stages of dementia to withdraw from activities he or she previously enjoyed. Because it is important to help the person remain engaged, it is helpful to understand how approach and knowledge of the effects of certain activities on quality of life and undesirable behaviors can create rewarding moments.

Quality time with a family member or friend in the middle or late stages of Alzheimer's can be meaningful, enjoyable and memorable; what's more, they may often give you clues what they'd like to do at any given time.

This guide is designed to help you create more of these meaningful moments with your loved one. As you read through it, try to keep in mind one of our cornerstones of Watercrest's  approach to memory care:

See the potential . . . not the limitation.



Selecting Appropriate Activities: One Size Does Not Fit All



Selecting activities is a fluid process, as it changes during the progression of the disease. In earlier stages, you may find cognitive, physical and social activities and expressive therapies for higher function levels to be appropriate. In later stages, simple sensory stimulation, human touch, gentle movements and repetition may be more successful. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Consider potential health and physical limitations: sight or hearing impairments, breathing issues, mobility, etc.; encourage activities that will promote failure-free outcomes rather than those hindered by physical restrictions. Perhaps mom was once an accomplished pianist but her arthritic hands now prevent her from gracing the ivory keys - today she may still find joy in humming or singing along to her favorite tunes.
- Utilize your knowledge of past personal and occupational history to increase the likelihood of participation. Did your loved one enjoy a particular hobby such as art or music, or perhaps she was a homemaker who proudly cared for her family with wonderful cooking, laundry, and organization skills? Was he a construction worker, good with his hands at creating and repairing things? Use creativity to find or adapt an activity that will generate and hold interest. Setting the table may be a chore for you, but to mom, it may provide a true sense of dignity and pride.
- Pay attention to the messages your loved one is sending you, whether verbal or otherwise. Does a particular activity cause visible irritability or anxiety, or bring a smile to their face, or just a relaxed demeanor? This includes understanding whether they wish to participate - or just watch - an activity. You may eventually understand what is preferred to do in the morning versus the afternoon. Remember, the goal should be enjoyment rather than accomplishment; **see the potential . . . not the limitation.**
- Seek help from family members and friends, and local and online support groups; others who share ideas and may appreciate yours!

Activities and Their Benefits



Activities provide much more than a means to pass the time! The immediate benefit from a meaningful activity is, of course, the enjoyment experienced by all involved. There are also indirect advantages.

Some activities may promote healthy eating and improved nutrition. Preparing a family favorite healthy meal not only contributes toward a meaningful engagement with reminiscing opportunities . . . the delicious meal can be enjoyed afterward!

Perhaps your loved one had grown their own vegetables in their younger days. Vegetable gardening, even indoor container gardening, can promote a sense of self worth. Discussions about the fruit or vegetable's benefits may have the added beneficial effect on choices at mealtime.

Grocery shopping not only accomplishes a necessary task, but can encourage conversations about favorite foods and ways to prepare them.

Other activities may help a loved one to stay physically and socially engaged:

- Afternoon tea with friends and neighbors
- Book clubs at a local library (or start your own!)
- Video calls with one or more family members and /or friends
- Activities with children: story time, singing, art
- Walking club; include light stretch exercises
- Old photo albums . . . some research suggests that looking at photos of loved ones can have a positive effect on mood and stress levels

Include cognitive engagement activities such as:

- Puzzles, completed together or with a group
- Card games, trivia as appropriate
- Writing letters to family, friends, nursing home residents or military groups
- Everyday household tasks such as laundry, washing dishes, etc.





Tips



Approach

Observation is a valuable tool; watch for diminishing interest, frustration or anxiety and modify the activity to minimize it accordingly.

A person with dementia may not have the ability to initiate a task or activity. Help to get it started, and assist where necessary. Offer instructional support, one step at a time, rather than a single, succession-type such as “first do this, then do that...” Complete each step before moving on to the next, and be sure comments are positive in nature; never criticize or discourage.

We all want to know we are needed. As you begin the activity, ask “Could you help me?” Personalization to make a meaningful connection can also provide encouragement to participate. “I’d love to give these cookies to my grandson - will you help me with them?”

Patience and Flexibility

Patience may be considered a virtue, but flexibility is a key to achieving it. Be ready to accept a different way of doing a task, welcome a new outcome for it, or put it off to try at a different time. Persons with dementia may fear trying something new, resulting in their refusal to try. See “approach” tip above.

Invite Conversation

Talk through activities, whether planned or simple household chores you’re doing alone. It may encourage conversation or at the very least, expressive gestures that help you learn what your loved one finds interesting.

Spiritual Activities

If your loved one has spiritual needs, help them maintain this important connection in whatever way possible: prayer, music, worship, holiday rituals, etc.

Activity Examples



Ideas for outdoors

- Take a walk or go to a park
- Plant flowers, water plants, weed the garden
- Picnic in the backyard
- Visit a petting zoo
- Play games with children or pets
- Relax on the porch or patio with lemonade, tea and cookies

Ideas for indoors

- Play favorite music or watch a favorite movie or sporting event
- Look at family photo albums; read a book
- Peruse favorite magazines; chat about its feature stories
- Play games; complete puzzles
- Talk about childhood school, friends
- Bake favorite cookies, bread, cake or pie
- Cook a meal together
- Set the table, wash and dry dishes

Get Support



Watercrest Senior Living associates are always available to welcome, to care, and to serve both you and your loved one. Our associates receive specialized dementia care training and are skilled in behavioral interventions and persuasion techniques that validate, redirect and comfort our residents during their times of need. If you find yourself in a difficult situation when visiting a loved one in our community, please do not hesitate to report the incident to a Resident Care Specialist, Wellness Nurse or Memory Care Director.

Resources:



Alzheimer's Association www.alz.org

National Institute of Aging www.nia.nih.gov

Suggested Readings



An Absent Mind, by Eric Rill

Seventy-one, and a man used to controlling those around him, Saul struggles to make peace with his disconnected family before Alzheimer's consumes his sanity.

His ramblings, humor, emotions, lucid moments, and confusion are laid bare, as well as the thoughts and feelings of his loved ones: his wife, Monique, conflicted and depressed...caring, yet angry; his daughter, Florence, compassionate, yet proper and reserved; his son, Joey, self-centered and narcissistic, seemingly indifferent to his family's challenges; and his doctor, an Alzheimer's specialist, who cares for Saul until his final days.

From the beginning Saul and his family know how it has to end, because no one has ever outsmarted Alzheimer's. But as they navigate the meandering road that will eventually bring Saul's demise, they leave behind their once disconnected lives and come together to weather their difficult journey.

Heartfelt and moving, this lauded novel, winner of 2014 gold medals from the Independent Publisher Book Awards, Readers' Favorite Book Awards, and the Living Now Book Award for Inspirational Fiction, will appeal to fans of Lisa Genova's *Still Alice* or Nicholas Sparks's *The Notebook*.

Chicken Soup for the Soul: Living with Alzheimer's & Other Dementia 101 Stories of Caregiving, Coping, and Compassion, by Amy Newmark and Angela Timashenka Geiger

Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia? You are not alone. With 101 encouraging and inspiring stories by others like you, this book is a source of support and encouragement throughout your caregiving journey.

Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia affect millions of people, and this book is especially for caregivers. This collection, a joint project with the Alzheimer's Association, is filled with 101 stories of love and lessons from others like you, will support and encourage you as you care for your loved one.

Coach Broyles' Playbook for Alzheimer's Caregivers, by Frank Broyles

It wasn't always easy for me to find the answers my family needed about Alzheimer's disease, and at times I was frustrated and confused. I promised myself that one day I would share all that I had learned—from my research and my experience—with other families that were dealing with Alzheimer's. This dream came true when the Playbook was created and made available to my fellow Arkansans. We received calls and letters from so many people thanking us for sharing our story and information that I decided to make my dream bigger, and share the Playbook with people across our country. I gathered my team, and together, with the help and support of many Arkansan people and companies, we were able to generate the funding and expertise needed to make this Playbook for anyone wanting information on how to care for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease. It is my hope that you can benefit from my experience.

Creating Moments of Joy: Along the Alzheimer's Journey, by Jolene Brackey

Jolene Brackey has a vision: that we will soon look beyond the challenges of Alzheimer's disease to focus more of our energies on creating moments of joy. When people have short-term memory loss, their lives are made up of moments. We are not able to create perfectly wonderful days for people with dementia or Alzheimer's, but we can create perfectly wonderful moments, moments that put a smile on their faces and a twinkle in their eyes. Five minutes later, they will not remember what we did or said, but the feeling that we left them with will linger. The new edition of *Creating Moments of Joy* is filled with more practical advice sprinkled with hope, encouragement, new stories, and generous helpings of humor. In this volume, Brackey reveals that our greatest teacher is having cared for and loved someone with Alzheimer's and that often what we have most to learn about is ourselves.

Learning to Speak Alzheimer's: A Groundbreaking Approach for Everyone Dealing with the Disease, by Joanne Koenig Coste

More than four million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's, and as many as twenty million have close relatives or friends with the disease. Revolutionizing the way we perceive and live with Alzheimer's, Joanne Koenig Coste offers a practical approach to the emotional well-being of both patients and caregivers that emphasizes relating to patients in their own reality. Her accessible and comprehensive method, which she calls habilitation, works to enhance communication between carepartners and patients and has proven successful with thousands of people living with dementia. *Learning to Speak Alzheimer's* also offers hundreds of practical tips, including how to:

- cope with the diagnosis and adjust to the disease's progression
- help the patient talk about the illness
- face the issue of driving
- make meals and bath times as pleasant as possible
- adjust room design for the patient's comfort
- deal with wandering, paranoia, and aggression

Lewy, Mom and Me: A Caregiver's Story, by Peggy Bushy

In her seventies, Peggy Bushy's mother, Francesca, started telling unbelievable stories. She claimed that people were invading her home and trying to kill her. She also became anxious and reclusive. For several discouraging years, Bushy searched in vain for a reason for her mother's behavior.

Finally, Francesca was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia. Although it's the third-most-common cause of dementia, Bushy was unable to find much information on the disease, and the medical community was frustratingly unhelpful.

Lewy, Mom, and Me is the book that Bushy wished had been available when her mother was first diagnosed. It details her personal journey of discovery, with all its challenges and revelations, and is written in a compassionate, empathetic style that will comfort any reader dealing with a parent's decline.

Bushy explains how she learned to accept the changes in her mother and to support Francesca emotionally as she grappled with her frightening illness. She also describes what was involved in caring for her mother first at home, then in long-term care, and finally in hospice.

Part memoir and part survival guide, this compelling testimony offers support and information for family caregivers of aging parents.

My Two Elaines: Learning, Coping, and Surviving as an Alzheimer's Caregiver,
by **Martin J. Schreiber**

Former governor of Wisconsin Marty Schreiber has seen his beloved wife, Elaine, gradually transform from the woman who had gracefully entertained in the Executive Residence to one who sometimes no longer recognizes him as her husband. In *My Two Elaines: Learning, Coping, and Surviving as an Alzheimer's Caregiver*, Marty candidly counsels those taking on this caregiving role. More than an account of Marty's struggles in caring for his wife, *My Two Elaines* also offers sage advice that respects the one with Alzheimer's while maintaining the caregiver's health. As two-thirds of those with Alzheimer's are women, he offers special guidance for men thrust into an unexpected job. With patience, adaptability, and even a sense of humor, Marty shows how love continues for his Second Elaine.

Still Alice, by Lisa Genova

From New York Times bestselling author and neuroscientist Lisa Genova comes the definitive—and illuminating—novel about Alzheimer’s disease. Now a major motion picture starring Oscar winner Julianne Moore!

Alice Howland is proud of the life she worked so hard to build. At fifty years old, she’s a cognitive psychology professor at Harvard and a world-renowned expert in linguistics with a successful husband and three grown children. When she becomes increasingly disoriented and forgetful, a tragic diagnosis changes her life—and her relationship with her family and the world—forever. As she struggles to cope with Alzheimer’s, she learns that her worth is comprised of far more than her ability to remember.

At once beautiful and terrifying, *Still Alice* is a moving and vivid depiction of life with early-onset Alzheimer’s disease that is as compelling as *A Beautiful Mind* and as unforgettable as *Ordinary People*.

Surviving Alzheimer’s: Practical tips and soul-saving wisdom for caregivers, by Paula Spencer Scott

The book recommended by dementia experts and family caregivers as the most complete, practical guide to Alzheimer’s and other dementia – now updated and expanded through end-of-life care.

This new edition of *Surviving Alzheimer’s* offers the best, most current thinking on how to help a loved one with memory loss and related symptoms without sacrificing YOU. You’ll learn:

- What’s behind odd, frustrating behaviors like repetition, wandering, personality changes, bathing resistance, and aggression – and what you can do
- How to defuse resentment, guilt, and family friction
- What to say for better communication and more cooperation
- Advice for spouses, out-of-town caregivers, and other situations
- 100’s of confidence-raising solutions from top doctors, social workers, dementia specialists, and family caregivers

The 36-Hour Day: A Family Guide to Caring for People Who Have Alzheimer's Disease, Related Dementias, and Memory Loss, by Nancy L. Mace, MA, and Peter V. Rabins, MD, MPH

The most trusted guide for caring for persons with Alzheimer's disease, memory loss, and dementia disorders-now revised and updated with practical and legal advice and compassionate guidance for families and caregivers.

When someone in your family suffers from Alzheimer's disease or other related memory loss diseases, both you and your loved one face immense challenges. For over thirty years, this book has been the trusted bible for families affected by dementia disorders. Now completely revised and updated, this guide features the latest information on the causes of dementia, managing the early stages of dementia, the prevention of dementia, and finding appropriate living arrangements for the person who has dementia when home care is no longer an option.

You'll learn:

- The basic facts about dementia
- How to deal with problems arising in daily care-meals, exercise, personal hygiene, and safety
- How to cope with an impaired person's false ideas, suspicion, anger, and other mood problems
- How to get outside help from support groups, friends, and agencies
- Financial and legal issues you must address.

Comprehensive and compassionate, The 36-Hour Day is the only guide you need to help your family through this difficult time.

