

Activities

The Best Friends approach to activities is outlined in the book titled, “Best Friends Book of Alzheimer’s Activities.” It frames activities in a broader sense than the planned, recreational terms we often limit them to. The Best Friends approach is consistent with the person-centered care model and is based on the following principles:

- The art of activities is not in *what is done*, it is *in the doing*.
- Activities should be individualized and tap into past interests and skills.
- Activities should be adult in nature.
- Activities should recall a person’s work-related past.
- Activities should stimulate all five senses.
- Doing nothing is actually doing something.
- Activities should tap into a person’s remaining physical skills.
- Activities should be initiated by others.
- Activities should be voluntary.
- Intergenerational activities are especially desirable.
- Activities you think will never work sometimes do.
- Personal care is an activity.
- Activities can be short.
- Activities are everywhere.
- Activities should fulfill religious and spiritual needs.

Source: The Best Friends Book of Alzheimer’s Activities (Bell, Troxel, Cox & Hamon)

The following suggestions might be helpful to you as a caregiver when planning activities for the person with Alzheimer’s or other dementias:

When planning activities consider the principles above and think about:

- The person: their skills, personal life stories, abilities.
- The activity: part of family routine, focus on enjoyment, not achievement, stress involvement, look for favourites, and consider time of day.
- Your approach: offer support and supervision, concentrate on the process, not the product, be flexible, be realistic and relaxed, don’t criticize or correct the person.
- The environment: make activities safe, change your surroundings to encourage activities, minimize distractions that can frighten or confuse, substitute and activity for a behaviour.



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There are times when you want variety and other times when you welcome routine. The challenge to caregivers is to find activities that provide meaning and purpose as well as pleasure. Be flexible and try out new ideas.

(Adapted from Houston and Southeast Chapter Alzheimer's Association website)

If you would like information on this subject, please contact me.

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