

Visiting Your Loved One

Sometimes when a loved one moves to a nursing home, family and friends may find it uncomfortable to visit. It's important to remember your loved one needs your visit. It provides crucial emotional contact and allows you to be part of their personal care team.

Families sometimes share that visiting their loved one is difficult due to communication issues, time constraints or seeing others who are in the later stages of the disease. It is important to remember that every person in a nursing home has a life journey and accomplishments that need to be cherished and acknowledged.

One may not know what to say or do when visiting. In order to prepare for the visit, you can call the nursing home and find out the best time to visit. Also, planning activities for you and your loved one to enjoy can help settle your nervousness. Think about how much time you want to spend at there and be realistic. Families sometimes express that they feel guilty if they do not visit every day, and yet when they do visit so frequently, they feel exhausted and burnt out. Recognize your threshold and understand it is okay to take a break.

Getting the most out of your visit:

- Approach visiting as a shared experience; think about what you want your loved one to experience and what you want to experience.
- Develop a list of 4-5 simple but meaningful things that can be a theme or focus. Draw from things that are a reflection of both you and your loved one.
- Come with a calm, clear mind, free of any expectation of how, or even if, your loved one will respond to your visit.
- Stimulate your loved ones senses. The senses have a powerful connection to many different areas to our brain, so sensory props can enable you to reconnect your loved one with you or a pleasant sensory experience from their past.

Activities That Can Tap Into the Five Senses:

"The Favorite Treat Visit"

Treat yourself and your loved one. Bring in favorite sweets or foods that they love but no longer have the chance to taste.

Alzheimer Society

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“The ‘Share Yourself’ Visit”

Share yourself with your loved one. What you are doing in your life and what things make you smile?

“The Celebrate Your Loved One Visit”

Talk to your loved one about things they have accomplished or do something the person likes to do. Bring in a fragrance they may be familiar with or photos they may enjoy.

“The Renew Spirituality Visit”

If your loved one has a spiritual faith, read to them passages or familiar prayers. Bring things that may be important to them: objects, reading materials, or other sacred items.

“The Tender Touch Visit”

Touch is one of the most basic of human needs and the most powerful thing we can do for another person. Give your loved one a hand or scalp massage. Play relaxing music and smile. Enjoy this moment with your loved one.

“The Music Visit”

Music has the power to cause emotions to well up within us. These feelings can bring overwhelming joy, sadness or just pure entertainment. Enjoy music together.

“The Kitchen Talk Visit”

Bring in a thermos of coffee or tea, favorite muffins or cookies, the newspaper, and discuss current events together.

“The Change of Seasons Visit”

Take your loved one out for a drive and share an experience of the change in color of leaves in the fall or a snowy winter day or new blossoms in springtime.