

# Caregiver Assistance News

*"Caring for You - Caring for Others"*

**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike,  
Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

**www.aaa7.org** **Helping You Age Better!**



**AUGUST 2014**

## **Make Alzheimer's Activities More Fun**

### **Doing What's Enjoyed**

Having fun and enjoying life is important for everyone, but people with Alzheimer's disease (AD) lose, little by little, the ability to do those things that they enjoyed in the past. Hobbies, concerts, guests, can become too complicated for those who are confused.

Most caregivers focus on those activities the person with AD no longer should do, such as driving, working, or going out alone. To help maintain good self-esteem, it is also important to help the person with AD continue to engage in meaningful activities and participate in family and community life. To do this, decide what activities they can do and help them adjust for abilities that are lost. Accentuate the positive.

Activities should make the best use of a person's remaining strengths and skills, and be based on interests and hobbies developed over a lifetime. These include activities like going for walks or gardening, which you can still enjoy together. Meaningful activities can also reduce the risk of agitation or upsetting behaviors.

We all enjoy experiencing things through our senses - smelling a flower, watching a sunset, or a familiar taste or smell. Some people enjoy touching a smooth piece of wood, stroking a furry animal, or placing their hand under running water. The importance of touch becomes even more important as AD progresses. Also, when there is no activity they can do, touch can become an important part of communication and simply holding hands becomes an activity.

There are many activities that encourage non-verbal (using body language, movement, etc.) emotional expression. For example, caring for plants or pets can help the person with AD express feelings of caring. He or she will still appreciate signs of affection. Depending on your relationship, holding hands, hugging, brushing hair, rubbing on hand cream, or other adult uses of touch (acceptable adult expressions of caring and concern) may provide emotional satisfaction to both of you.

Listening to music and singing can be both enjoyable and calming. Memory of song lyrics can remain longer than the person's ability to carry a conversation.

Activities with children can bring joy and laughter. It also helps the person feel they are teaching or helping.

***(continued on Page 2)***



# Finding the Right Activity

An activity doesn't have to be something out of the ordinary. Try modifying regular activities of daily life (ADLs) so that the person with dementia can still do them. Helping a person bathe is an opportunity to feel water, smell soap, tell a story.

Chores such as dusting, sweeping, doing laundry, preparing food, and cooking can be satisfying activities. Even bathing, shaving and getting dressed can provide an opportunity for chatting and reminiscing, singing or telling jokes. Making these everyday ADLs enjoyable can improve cooperation so that you both can enjoy them.

✓ Consider ways the person in your care can continue to participate in activities enjoyed in the past: If they used to play tennis, but can no longer keep score, try just hitting the ball back and forth. If they enjoyed cooking, make a meal together.

✓ Try something new. In spite of AD, or sometimes because of it, people often discover talents they may not have expressed before, such as painting, collage, or even a greater sense of spirituality.

✓ Doing activities or chores that recall a person's work-related past can bring much happiness.

✓ Break an activity down into simple steps.

Be generous with praise, do not criticize or correct mistakes, although you may need to help if the activity becomes too difficult. Don't become upset if they walk away in the middle of the project. People with AD are easily distracted and fatigued.

**Source: *The Comfort of Home for Alzheimer's Disease; The 36-Hour Day***



## Making Activities More Fun...continued from Page 1

In the early stages, just a reminder or a cue may be enough to help them start, and they may be able to carry on from there.

To keep activities enjoyable:

- Establish a routine that includes a balance of rest and activity.
- Recognize limitations. Parties, trips, concerts may be too stimulating.
- Adjust the activity to make it possible for them to participate.

Don't tell a person with AD about an activity you have planned too far in advance because this may cause anxiety, not a pleasant expectation.

## Don't Fall - Be Safe!

*A person with AD, even in the early stages, may have subtle changes in walking ability that will become more severe as time goes on. This can create difficulty with balance. If the person has other illnesses, the problems may be more severe. Any amount of exercise helps reduce risk, but gather advice from the doctor about the best exercise routine.*

# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

## Save Time with Ready-Made Activities



While you may enjoy expressing your own creativity in devising activities for the person in your care, there are also “ready made” resources. Find catalogues with activities especially designed for people with dementia, as well as music and subjects that may remind the person of earlier times. Be careful not to use materials that look too childlike; however, simple puzzles, sorting, matching, and stacking blocks or shapes can be appropriate for people with dementia. As always, safety is a prime concern and games that have small pieces or that can be swallowed or have sharp edges should be avoided.

*Note: Some people with AD become very upset watching violence on TV because they think it is real. Careful TV monitoring is important.*

## Alzheimer’s Association Support Programs

### What Families Need to Know...When the Diagnosis is Alzheimer’s Disease or Related Dementia

*Caring for someone with cognitive impairment is a 24-hour a day, 7-day a week challenge. This series of educational sessions provides an opportunity for families to learn and share together in an informal setting. Topics are presented by experts in their respective fields.*

#### Brown County (in Clermont County)

Wednesday, October 15 and October 22 • 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm • Mercy Health Clermont Hospital, Batavia

#### Gallia County

Thursday, September 18 and 25 • 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm (9/18) and 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm (9/25)  
Holzer Medical Center Education Center, Gallipolis

#### Jackson/Vinton County

Tuesday, October 7 and 14 • 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm • Holzer Medical Center - Jackson

#### Lawrence County

Thursday, September 4 and 11 • 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm • St. Mary’s Medical Center Ironton Campus

#### Scioto County

Tuesday, September 23 and 30 • 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm • Southern Ohio Medical Center Education Building, Portsmouth



### Understanding and Dealing with Alzheimer’s Disease or Another Dementia

*This program will provide an opportunity for families and caregivers to learn and ask questions about Alzheimer’s disease and dementia, while receiving support from others in similar situations. Program is free of charge. No registration required.*

#### Jackson County: 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm at Four Winds Nursing Facility in Jackson or Jenkins Care Community in Wellston (noted below)

September 18th - Activities and Interaction (Jenkins) • October 16th - Advanced Stage Issues and Decisions (Four Winds)  
November 20th - Dealing with Holidays (Jenkins) • December 18th - Open Discussion (Four Winds)  
January 15, 2015 - Making the Transition from Home to a Care Facility (Jenkins)

#### Scioto County: 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm at Best Care Nursing and Rehab in Wheelersburg

October 14th - How to Make Visits More Meaningful (At Home and Nursing Facility)/Dealing with Holiday Issues  
December 9th - Understanding Challenging Behaviors

**For more information about these programs and other similar programs available in or near your community, or for assistance with registering, please call Melissa Dever, LSW, from the Alzheimer’s Association, at (740) 710-1821 or 1-800-272-3900.**



**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

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Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a nurse or social worker who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org).

## **Safety Tips - *Limitations and Solutions***

<b><u>Limitation</u></b>	<b><u>Tip</u></b>
Poor Memory	<i>Focus on the present. "Today is a sunny day," rather than, "Do you remember that winter snowstorm?"</i>
Talking About the Past	<i>Use this opportunity to learn about the past (as the person currently remembers it is).</i>
Difficulty with Orientation to Time and Place	<i>Provide cues such as pictures of a toilet on the bathroom door or a spoon glued to the kitchen door to help the person find their way around the house.</i>
Doesn't Understand What to Do	<i>Simplify the instructions and speak slowly. <u>Show</u> how to do it.</i>
Not Paying Attention	<i>Perhaps they are tired, or the activity is not too interesting, too difficult or confusing. Try it at a later time.</i>
The Activity is Not Completed	<i>Do not focus on the product. Keep reminding yourself it is not important.</i>
The Person with Alzheimer's Disease Does it Wrong	<i>Keep your sense of humor!</i>