

## Activities for Meaningful Engagement

Activities are a great way for you to engage with your loved one. Engagement is any time a person with memory loss joins in on the conversation, the action, and/or the process. Your loved one with memory loss needs to feel like he/she belongs and needs to feel productive. Those with memory loss still have something to contribute.

Let's show them they belong and that they still matter.

Here's a list of more than 70 activities for your loved one with memory loss. Activities for lots of different spaces, occasions, and times are included. Keep in mind, it's about the process and NOT the finished product. You may have to re-fold the laundry or eat cookies that are misshapen and weird sizes, but that's OK.

Be flexible. And ask yourself: What's more important? Perfectly folded towels and magazine-worthy cookies, or laughter and conversation with mom?

### Morning Activities

- Wake them up with music instead of a blaring alarm
- Bring juice or coffee to the bedroom for them to smell and taste as they are waking
- Sing a morning song (example: *Oh, What a Beautiful Morning*)
- Have them pick between two outfits that you preselected the night before
- Read the newspaper or a paper devotional
- Watch the sun rise
- Sit outside or by a window and bird watch

### Personal Care Activities

- Create a clean, spa-like environment in the bathroom by clearing away all unnecessary products and having a nice bathrobe on hand
- Call bath time, "spa time" or "water therapy"
- Play music
- Sing
- Give a hand massage with a lotion that has a favorite scent
- Give an in-home manicure

### Food and Kitchen Activities

- Polish the silver
- Fold towels, napkins, dishcloths
- Load and unload the dishwasher and wash dishes
- Set the table
- Butter the bread
- Make a salad with ingredients pre-cut (fruit salad, lettuce salad, pasta salad, etc.)
- Cut out biscuits or separate canned biscuits
- Clip coupons and search grocery ads
- Shake heavy cream until it turns to butter, stir in a pinch of salt for fresh butter
- Use a bread maker for a fresh bread sensory experience

- Make banana pudding with instant pudding mix, layered vanilla wafers, and bananas cut with a plastic knife
- Make cookies
- Mix pumpkin pie filling and pour into pre-made pie crust
- Snap beans, shell peas, and shuck corn from your farmer's market bounty
- Make fresh lemonade
- Make homemade ice cream
- Make guacamole
- Have afternoon tea

## Activities for When You're Waiting Somewhere

- Name 5-10 things that you would...
  - Take on a picnic
  - Pack in the car before a trip
  - See at a basketball game
  - See at a wedding
  - Find in a spice cabinet
  - Find in a tool box
  - Find in a kitchen drawer
- 10 words that begin with the letter...
- Name 5 wild animals, farm animals, pets, etc.
- Fill in the blank on sayings and discuss the meaning of each saying
  - You are the apple of my \_\_\_\_\_
  - A penny saved is a penny \_\_\_\_\_
  - The early bird catches the \_\_\_\_\_
  - Penny wise and pound \_\_\_\_\_
  - A stitch in time saves \_\_\_\_\_
- Would you rather...
  - Have cheeseburger or pizza?
  - Eat french fries or onion rings?
  - Travel by train or plane?

## Discussion Starters

\*Don't ask questions that could have right or wrong answers. Instead of asking: How many grandchildren do you have? Say: Tell me about your grandchildren. Instead of asking: What did you have for lunch today? Ask: Did you enjoy your lunch today?

- Ask open-ended questions about the past
  - Someone told me during WWII there were rations on sugar, gas, and other things. How did families manage that?
  - Was it easy for you to learn to ride a bike?
  - What was your first date like?
- Ask questions about favorites

- What was your favorite school lunch?
- What are some of favorite TV shows or radio shows? (Then, find clips of the show on YouTube or find episodes on services like Netflix and watch together.)
- Google funny yearbook pictures or funny animal photos and laugh together
- Search out old advertisements and ask about grocery shopping, cars, etc. when they were young adults
- Print out funny pictures or pictures from an era they remember fondly and ask them to caption the photo or tell a story about it
- Talk about well-known sites or favorite vacation spots
  - The White House has 16 bedrooms. That's a lot of beds to make. I'd hate to think about folding all of those fitted sheets. Do you think they have a staff to handle that, or would the first family have to take care of it?
  - The Grand Canyon is bigger than Rhode Island. I wonder how long it would take to drive around it. Would you ride a donkey down into the Canyon?
- Say, "Tell me more..." when they talk about a memory

## **Outdoor/Out-of-the-House Activities**

- Feed pond ducks (NOT bread but oatmeal or thawed frozen/canned corn or peas)
- Go to the zoo
- Visit the Memphis Botanic Gardens or the Dixon
- Visit an art museum – call ahead if you are concerned about handicapped access and bring a wheelchair if you are concerned about walking for very long
- Visit a farm supply store
- Feed the birds in your backyard
- Plant flowers in a raised bed
- Rake leaves
- Walk and talk about what you see – house architecture, trees, flowers
- Cut flowers and arrange them

## **Activities with Household Items**

- Sort coins, socks, nuts and bolts
- Dust
- Sweep
- Do chair exercises (search on YouTube)
- Look through an old jewelry box
- Search magazines for all things green, photos of food, photos of children, the letter M, etc.

## **Games**

- Solve a jigsaw puzzle – make sure it's the appropriate number of pieces, not too many or too few
- Play dominoes
- Play a card game
- Play a board game that is simple but not childlike
- Play BINGO

## **Creative Activities**

- Color in an adult coloring book
- Create a Shutterfly book with pictures from your family to look through and reminisce
- Create a Pinterest art project
- Crochet, knit, or quilt
- Make a family tree poster
- Craft holiday cards

## **Activities with Friends/Family**

- Ask an older grandchild to set up a playlist on Spotify of favorite music
- Invite a younger grandchild over and read a book together
- Ask a friend with a calm pet to visit
- Bake a birthday cake for someone special and take it to them

## **For Those Who are More Progressed**

- Hand and foot massages
- Apply lotion
- Hair care
- Hug and give a backrub
- Listen to music
- Sing
- Make simple foods or drinks, like lemonade
- Look at photo albums or coffee table books
- Touch quilts
- Virtual landscape scenes (such as an aquarium ... once again, YouTube is your friend!)
- Enjoy the scent of citrus, spices, and herbs
- Talk with them, even if you're not sure they understand or can hear



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