

Activities to Stay Healthy

Both you and your care recipient will benefit from regular activity. Neither of you will want to sit around the house all day. Whether the person you care for is relatively mobile or bedbound, there are activities that can benefit the mind and body. And don't forget about yourself! It is easy to forget that you, too, will benefit from activity. Here are some ideas for things you can do:

Conversation

Talking can be great therapy. It is a way to connect with someone else, to affirm your worth and importance. Even for people with Alzheimer's disease, talking can be useful; though they may not be able to talk rationally or with a sense of reality, they can often carry on a limited conversation about everyday things. Caregivers and care recipients can get into a grind, where neither talks in-depth to the other for long stretches of time. Try to break this habit; set aside time that you can talk—not about important things, necessarily, but just about the weather, the sunset, or the dog. You'll be surprised at how enjoyable it can be.

Hobbies

In the stress and strain of daily care, hobbies often fall by the wayside. Reading, model train building, birdwatching, needlework: they all provide relaxation and an opportunity to escape, if only temporarily, from the burdens of everyday life.

Planning

Planning for the future is as important as recalling the past. Talk with your care recipient about what they hope still to do—even if it is a small thing they would like to do in the next week. Talk, too, about what they hope for their children, grandchildren and other family members.



Hobbies are a great way to provide relaxation and an opportunity to escape the daily routine.

Remembering

For the elderly, going through old memories is enjoyable and a vital part of their lives. Encourage the person you care for to remember old times—when he or she was a child, when the children were young, vacations, special parties or any other time that brings back pleasant memories. If your care recipient is a family member, this is also an ideal opportunity to record family history and to reminisce yourself. Understand that sometimes negative memories arise, too, but that's okay. Help them to document or record their stories.

Physical Activity

Any kind of physical activity, from indoor exercises to walking around the block or visiting a museum, can help make a person feel more lively and energetic. If your care recipient is not able to engage in stressful physical activity, consider playing music and encouraging him or her to dance slowly or sway back and forth.

Volunteer Work

Volunteering in the community—in a local senior center, at church or at a school—can provide valuable socialization time for seniors. If they are able to get out of the house, they might want to consider taking a day or two a week to volunteer for a few hours. In addition to providing social interaction, volunteering brings a sense of worth, well-being and importance.