# SIMPLE ACTIVITIES

# Suggestions of Activities for an Older Person with Cognitive Impairment

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# TO KEEP IN MIND

- 1. A person with cognitive impairment may have difficulty performing complex tasks or activities.
- 2. Older adults may be more successful with activities they have performed **throughout most of their lives**.
- 3. Activities should be **simple**, adult like, normal, and meaningful.
- 4. Nearly any activity can be adapted to the level and type of cognitive skills still retained by the person with the cognitive impairment, no matter how impaired the person is.
- 5. Most of the activities in which a person with dementia can more easily engage will likely be those of self care (dressing, grooming, bathing, etc.), household tasks (washing dishes, vacuuming, raking leaves, folding laundry, repairing foot stools, etc.), and recreational activities which she or he has enjoyed throughout most of her/his adult life.
- 6. These suggestions are for people with **moderate to severe impairment**. They are activities the person might enjoy and feel comfortable doing or at least actively participating in. These are just some of many possible ideas.
- 7. The activities are listed generally in the order in which they are likely to appeal to the person with dementia, because they are **simpler**, **more familiar**, **and more obviously useful**.
- 8. **The activities most likely to be successful are listed first** and the activities most likely to be dropped are listed at the end.
- 9. Of course any activity the person enjoys (as long as it is safe) is best.

# **ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS**

# **DRESSING & GROOMING:**

- 10. Fixing/combing hair or a friend's hair
- 11. Manicure for self or a friend
- 12. Massaging cream into skin
- 13. Trying on hats or new clothes
- 14. Admiring self in mirror
- 15. Applying makeup

## HOUSEHOLD TASKS:

- 16. Dusting
- 17. Dry Mopping
- 18. Sweeping
- 19. Vacuuming
- 20. Polishing silver
- 21. Cooking & baking
- 22. Arranging serving trays and hors d'oeuvres
- 23. Setting the table
- 24. Serving meals
- 25. Washing & drying dishes

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- 26. Folding towels, laundry, napkins, etc.
- 27. Shaking out towels, laundry, table cloths, clean throw rugs, etc.
- 28. Making beds
- 29. Watering plants
- 30. Raking leaves
- 31. Trimming bushes
- 32. Digging holes in the garden
- 33. Gardening
- 34. Repairing small stools
- 35. Sanding small stools or other recognizable objects made of wood
- 36. Sorting hardware (nails, screws, nuts, etc.), buttons, holiday cards, coupons, etc.
- 37. Cutting coupons
- 38. Feeding and grooming pets
- 39. Feeding birds in a bird feeder

#### RECREATIONAL:

- 40. Singing
- 41. Listening to music (perhaps through headphones)
- 42. Reciting or listening to old poems and familiar stories
- 43. Fill in blanks of old proverbs or sayings
- 44. Spelling
- 45. Dancing
- 46. Playing simple card games
- 47. Sorting playing cards
- 48. Conversing about items: in a "theme basket", in the environment, old items (eg., antique farm implements), personal photographs, clothes which need mending or laundering,
- 49. Conversing about advice to give younger people
- 50. Exercise to music individually or in groups
- 51. Volley ball
- 52. Large cloth (eg., bed spread, large towel) arm movement/wave making
- 53. Walking indoors or outdoors
- 54. Kicking a ball
- 55. Feeling a variety of textures
- 56. Looking through magazines, books, newspapers, cards, jewelry, etc.
- 57. Stuffing and unstuffing envelopes
- 58. Folding papers
- 59. Hosting and serving at a tea party or other celebration/gathering

# **HOBBIES & CRAFTS:**

- 60. Wrapping yarn around cardboard or into a ball
- 61. Sanding wood (e.g., a disconnected table leg)
- 62. Arranging flowers

## **SOURCES:**

Weaverdyck, S. (1991) Intervention to Address Dementia as a Cognitive Disorder. Chapter 13 in D. Coons (Ed.) Specialized Dementia Care Units. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Weaverdyck, S. (1999) Activities: A Key to Pleasure for Clients with Dementia. Home Health Aide Digest, 5(6), 10-12, November-December, 1999.

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