

## ***Creating Fun For Frail Seniors***

When dealing with frail and declining parents and grandparents, the caregiver's main goal is usually quality care, safety, comfort and medical attention. But for seniors, life is more than being a patient. It is about continuing to be an interesting person, engaged in activities that is enjoying life.



Common suggestions for seniors include visits, letters, and phone calls but it is also important to continue venturing out in the community. It doesn't take a caregiver long to realize that even "mini" excursions involve more work - transporting walkers or wheelchairs, assisting in/out of cars and doors, walking slower, negotiating steps carefully, finding bathrooms, packing extra clothes, keeping them dry, warm or cool - so plan carefully.



### **Mini-outings**

Be aware your loved ones often do not have the stamina or mobility for trips to fascinating museums, over-stimulating casinos, monster malls, giant sports stadiums, wooded parks, or loud modern restaurants, but they may be able to go out for an hour. Try a simple trip to the supermarket with its bakery smells, colorful flowers, fanciful balloons, and acres of fresh, bright produce. It can be a new topic of discussion for weeks to come with those nursing home buddies.

Antique browsing, easy to locate in Polk County, is another idea that can stimulate long forgotten memories. "I had that same glassware." "Look at the quilts - just like Grandmother's," and so on.

If you go to a department store, go during non-peak shopping periods. Look at glittery store displays, smell the perfumes, try the samples, touch the silky clothing, all good stimulation for the senses.

Try a neighborhood jewelry store. Many seniors have jewelry they would like repaired, wristwatches that need batteries, rings that need resizing due to weight change with aging. Instead of just taking care of these errands on your own, invite your loved one along. Watch as they become the customer, the center of attention, and have a chance to feel in charge again.

Include seniors in the activities of your everyday life. An example is a family who took their father-in-law with them while searching for house properties. He was curious about these houses, their yards, their roofs, the neighborhoods. "I've been in that house." "This was always a good neighborhood." It was a chance to remember being a neighbor, a businessman, a father and a contributor to the community. Other ideas might be a quilt shop for a former quilter, a hardware store for the ardent handyman, and always, -- the library.

You don't have to go out to have fun of course. Here are some ways to fight boredom on the home front:

- Have a sing-along to their favorite music. Play the music loud and clear.
- Get dressed up and take some photo portraits - use them for family gifts.
- Rent/borrow movies for slow afternoons - old ones, funny ones, scary ones.
- Have a deck of cards on hand and play the old familiar games - gin rummy, hearts, and war. Scrabble is great fun with grandkids.
- Keep a puzzle going if you have a spare tabletop.
- Pull out a family album, family photos trigger floods of memories.

- Rearrange furniture and pictures - just for stimulation.

If living in a facility, get out and visit other residents, attend presentations, craft sessions, chair exercises, and lunch groups. Pick a theme for the week or season and decorate their room or door. It will bring people in to check it out which start conversations. Order in or pick up some favorite foods that aren't on the regular menu. Manicures and pedicures are a special treat too. Have candy for drop-in guests and gifts for visitors - save time by ordering on line.

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