

Dementia and the family: Download and do

Creating and simplifying activities

This activity will help you and the family to:

- Understand how to match activity to ability so that your loved one gets the most from the things you do together
- Create your own intergenerational activities, which can be shared with other families via parentsandfamilies.com!
[<http://parentsandfamilies.com/activities-added/>]

Doing things can become more challenging for a person with dementia – but there will *always* be things you can do together. Find them! Remember that activities can be a mix of leisure, task-based activities (doing things around the home), self-care, conversing ... there are many possibilities. The golden rule is that most people will benefit from an activity that matches their interests to their ability.

Generally, you will approach activities differently based on the stage of your loved one's dementia. You may be interested to find out more about something called the "Pool Activity Level". This categorises people's involvement and engagement with activity at 4 different levels:

- Planned activity, whereby someone is able to complete activities but may need some direction (and help if a problem arises).
- Exploratory activity, where the focus is on the 'taking part' (or process of the activity) rather than the completed, end result.
- Sensory activity, where there is less of a focus on engaging with the activity and more of a reliance on 'muscle memory'. In other words, repetitive, instinctive actions – with just a single step – are most successful
- Reflex activity, where someone is less aware of their environment and is more responsive to sensory stimulation of some kind, such as a hand massage, a 'fidget apron' or enjoying the smell of freshly baked cookies.

From reading about these 4 stages, hopefully you will be able to relate to where your loved one is at? Those at the early stage of dementia, will be at the planned activity level, but as the disease progresses, your loved one will move through the stages.

Remember that with the activities in the book – and those you come up with yourself – you should be doing things *together*. You can work as a team, assisting your loved one with elements of the activity that they may need help with (but don't take over!). And, how about this ... research has shown that intergenerational activity has a greater, and more positive, impact on people with dementia than any other kind of activity.

Are you ready to come up with your own intergenerational, dementia-friendly activities? If so, get the family together and work through the step-by-step framework below.

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Step	Your notes and plans
1. Link to your loved one's interests – ie, what 'theme' will you use?	
2. Match activity to ability – what 'type' of activities are best suited to your loved one (ie planned activity with an end result or sensory stimulation?)	
3. Think about focus and purpose – how will you make this activity meaningful and beneficial?	
4. Source and research some inspiration – see p.93 of <i>Dementia and the family</i> to get you started	
5. Add in some dementia-friendly ingredients – social interaction, music, reminiscence, sensory stimulation ... make it inter-generational	
6. Bring in the props – what can you use to bring your activity to life (whether original or replica)?	
7. Explaining the task – do you need to break the activity steps down further or demonstrate the actions required?	
8. Who, where, when, how? From what you know about your loved one, is there a preferred time of day to do this? How is their concentration span?	
9. Ready, go, steady! Do you need to think about a Plan B, if all doesn't go the way you want it?	
10. Be present – remember everything you read in the communication section in <i>Dementia and the family</i> ... and have confidence and self-belief in the difference you can make.	