

**WE CARE**

We hope that these tips help you to provide meaningful activities for your loved one. If you would like to discuss these issues further, please call the Care2Caregivers helpline. Our dedicated, professional staff members, who have also been family caregivers, are here to listen and guide you.



WHEN YOU CARE • WE ARE THERE

**For more information:**

Comprehensive Services on Aging (COPSA) has been providing compassionate and sensitive mental health care to the elderly since 1975. A team of Geriatric Psychiatrists, Social Workers and Case Managers are available to assist families with diagnosis and treatment. COPSA also provides training for professionals, family caregivers and the community on issues related to aging, memory and mental health. Care2Caregivers provides resources, referrals, information and supportive counseling to anyone caring for someone with memory loss. Call for help.

**HELPLINE: 800.424.2494**

**Try Something NEW!**

Don't be afraid to try new things, even if it is something they never liked or attempted before. Maybe your mother can't garden anymore, but when you try some painting or coloring, you learn that she enjoys it. As the disease progresses, personality changes and tastes may alter along with their abilities. Activities you never thought they would like might become a favorite pastime.

**Later Stages of Memory Impairment**

When a person is in the later stages of memory loss, they may no longer be able to walk or talk. Here are a few activities that can be enjoyed even if they are confined to a wheelchair or a hospital bed:

**Visual** – fish tank, bird feeder, mobiles

**Tactile** – box of fabric, hand massage, pet therapy

**Auditory** - music, nature sounds, wind chimes

**Smell** – scented unlit candles, lavender aroma therapy, scented hand lotions, smell of cooking or baking bread

**Taste** – lollipops, ice pops



*Visual*



*Tactile*



*Auditory*



*Smell*



*Taste*

**RUTGERS HEALTH**

University Behavioral Health Care  
COPSA Institute for Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders

**ACTIVITIES**

**Strategies for Keeping Your Loved One Engaged**



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[ubhc.rutgers.edu/services/geriatric](http://ubhc.rutgers.edu/services/geriatric)  
[www.Care2Caregivers.com](http://www.Care2Caregivers.com)

## Activity Ideas for Memory Loss



You may notice that as your loved one's **memory loss** progresses, they may be **less able to engage in activities** on their own. They may have **increased difficulty successfully completing tasks** such as **responsibilities at work, helping around the house, socializing, or leisure activities.**

Some caregivers observe that their loved one, who used to be very active, now sits passively for most of the day. The technical term for this is "apathy". But just because a person is having difficulty getting started or staying focused on a task or hobby, it doesn't mean that they can't successfully participate in meaningful activities. Think for a moment about the good feeling you get when you complete a task around the house such as finishing the laundry, or from reading a book, or having a nice lunch date with friends. People with memory loss want those same good feelings: those that come from having a purpose each day, being of value to their family, experiencing enjoyment from leisure activities and having positive social connections with others.

It is important to keep a person busy during the day so they may be more inclined to sleep better at night. Activities may also lessen anxiety and irritability brought on by boredom. Furthermore, people need to feel engaged and useful as the disease progresses, since their own sense of self-worth may be declining. They will feel more "normal" and connected if both their mind and body are kept occupied.

Here are a few strategies to help you keep your loved one active:



### Exercise

Physical movement is beneficial for all aspects of a person's well being. Motions such as walking, swimming, dancing and other easy movements are very helpful. Even if someone is unable to walk, or even stand, it is important that they not just lie in bed or in a lounge chair all day. Basic stretching and bending of the joints can be done even if the body is compromised. There are many videos available in your local library or on YouTube. Physical and Occupational Therapists are also good resources for how to safely incorporate movement into your daily care routine.

### Draw from Past Life Skills

If your mother used to be a housewife, she might still enjoy helping with cooking and cleaning. Mashing potatoes, stirring cake batter, folding laundry or sorting socks are all simple tasks to help her feel important and needed. If your father was an accountant, give him some papers, pens and envelopes. If your husband used to do handiwork, place a variety of nuts, bolts, twine, wood and sandpaper in front of him and let him work. Remember to keep safety in mind.



### Arts & Crafts

Engaging someone with folding paper or knitting can be an enjoyable activity for both of you, or can keep them busy while you tend to

the rest of the chores. Keep the patterns and tools simple and safe, ensuring that, if you leave them alone, nothing toxic can be eaten. Tie a few simple knots in some rope and ask your loved one to untie them. Thread some pasta with string or yarn. Sorting socks, buttons, spoons or papers can also keep a person meaningfully engaged. Try leaving old greeting cards and some photos out on a table. This can be especially helpful if your loved one is pacing throughout the day. It may provide an opportunity for them to stop and look at something interesting.



### Music

In the early stages of the disease, a person may still be able to actively listen, sing, play an instrument, or dance to music. This can be a calming and joyful experience. Experiment with different genres that they liked in the past, or even something new, as their tastes and senses may be changing. The part of the brain that stores music memories is often one of the last parts to be impaired by Alzheimer's disease. Even when a person can no longer speak, they may be able to sing. So keep the music playing!

