

The Many Benefits of Enhanced Home Care with Activities

Recent studies have proven that boredom can have a very real effect on physical, emotional and mental health. A senior should not sit around all day with little or nothing to do. The following showcase the impacts that enrichment activities can have on seniors' lives.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Having an in-home caregiver to encourage and assist with regular physical activity may be the most important thing an older person can do to stay healthy and self-reliant. Physical activity can:

- Help prevent or delay some diseases and disabilities, and in some cases, can actually improve some conditions.
- Improve mood.
- Increase stamina and improve the health of the heart, lungs and circulatory system.
- Help prevent falls (a major cause of disability) through balance exercises.
- Give older adults the strength to maintain independence and avoid injuries by doing resistance training exercise just one day a week (The Journal of Gerontology: Biological Sciences, April 2002).
- Cause reversal of the brain shrinkage that occurs as people age (The Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences (Vol. 61A, No. 11)).



MUSIC

Involving music in home care isn't simply about listening to music, but can also include singing, playing an instrument, writing songs or moving/dancing to music. Music can:

- Relieve anxiety, agitation, depression and loneliness. (A CoroHealth Music First 2010 study showed agitation and depression dropped by up to 54%.)
- Be valuable for pain reduction, coping with stress and in stimulating the immune system (Music Making and Wellness Project 1998).
- Help a person with Alzheimer's disease, as music from his or her youth can trigger forgotten memories. (The effect is part memory activation, part stress relief and part cognitive activity.)

ART

There are increasingly more studies about the positive effects art can have on persons with Alzheimer's, but art is beneficial to all.

- For any skill level, drawing, watercolors and oil painting are great for mental stimulation and fine motor skills.
- Gazing at beautiful artwork brings a person as much joy as gazing at a loved one, according to research using brain scans (University College London, Semir Zeki 2011).
- Art gives a person with Alzheimer's an opportunity to express herself and communicate even after some of her standard communications abilities have gone.
- Art therapy can help people with dementia regain some lost muscle function and coordination because it actively engages both hemispheres of the brain.

TAP INTO PERSONAL INTERESTS

Selecting activities that tie into a senior's personal history, interests and ability level will have the greatest impact and bring the best results.

- For example, if a senior has always had a love for poetry, an in-home caregiver can use that information to create meaningful activities incorporating poetry.
- If a senior was a teacher, a discussion about literature or chemistry might be more stimulating than playing a game of checkers.

Spending time with an in-home caregiver can be fun and enriching! **Continuum** not only offers basic care for living, like meal preparation and housekeeping, but is also actively involved in discovering what activities and pastimes interested the senior before infirmity. We implement this information into care for the best possible home care experience.

Sources: ehow, ParentGiving, Suite101, National Institute on Aging, American Music World, The Telegraph, eMaxHealth