

### *Alzheimer's Disease—Activities*

*"My wife can't handle the cooking anymore. She also doesn't work on her needlework. She's idle so much of the day, but I don't know what to give her to do."*

- Do not try to teach new skills or re-train for old hobbies. Some long-term memory is better preserved than short-term memory. Try to build on well-learned and preserved abilities. Some people, for example, can sing or play instruments that they learned long ago.
- Look for activities that last no longer than half an hour. The person's attention span is shorter than normal.
- Try activities that are familiar, simple, repetitive, and do not require much decision-making. Examples include sweeping, vacuuming, folding towels, raking, picking up sticks, stringing beads, rolling coins, stuffing envelopes, and shelling peas.
- Break tasks down into smaller steps if necessary. For example, "set the table" can be broken down into 'placemats,' 'plates,' 'napkins,' 'silver,' 'glasses.'
- Help get the person started by verbally guiding her or demonstrating the desired activity.
- Try to keep activities on an adult level. Allow the person to continue doing as much as she can by herself. Household or yard work helps her feel like a contributing member of the household.
- Adjust your expectations to fit the remaining ability. The task may not be done as well as it would have if you had done it, but remember the importance of the person's self-esteem.
- Be patient and flexible. Allow for a little more time to do things. Look for ways to adapt tasks so she can participate.
- Watch for frustration. If the person becomes upset or agitated, step in to help or distract with another pleasurable activity, break or snack. Remember, outings and passive entertainment can be quite successful.

(Adapted from Joseph and Kathleen Bryan Alzheimer's Disease Research Center Duke University)

### *Supporting Arkansas Families Since 1984*

Alzheimer's Arkansas Programs and Services is an independent non-profit 501(c)(3) organization governed by a local volunteer Board of Directors.

Our services include:

- 24 hour telephone support
- Family and professional education
- Support groups for patients and caregivers
- Financial assistance
- Community awareness presentations
- Monthly newsletter and Lending Library

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