Alzheimer's Care Card #4
Alzheimer's & 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 they learned long ago.

Look for activities that last no longer that half an hour. The person's attention span is shorter than it used to be.

Alzheimer's Arkansas Caring for Caregivers 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
Lending Library
Try activities that are familiar, simple, and repetitive. 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, silverware, then glasses. Help get the person started by verbally guiding them or demonstrating the desired activity.

Try to keep activities on an adult level. Allow the person to continue doing as much as they are able. Housework or yard work helps them 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.

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.