



# How to Make the Most of your Visit with Loved Ones

August 30, 2018 | Deb Koelln – Chief Care Officer



# Agenda for Today

- 10 Tips for Success
- Visiting day Activity Ideas



# 10 Tips for Visit Success



# 1. Make the visit about THEM!

- Care communities can make visitors feel certain ways: sad, guilty, or even depressed. But, don't let your feelings set the tone for the visit. Refocus and refresh.
- Your presence lets them know you care.
- Adjust expectations for what a “successful” visit is.
  - Health conditions, time of day, and more may be factors at play
  - Sometimes sitting quietly together may be wonderful and meaningful to them



## 2. Plan visits for best times in THEIR day

- Generally, in the morning or right after lunch is when older adults have the most energy.
- Call ahead and ask staff what time they would suggest.
- Or, call your loved one and ask them.
  - You can also see if they need you to bring anything for them
  - This will also give them something to look forward to



### 3. Be mindful of visit length and amount of visitors

- There is no right or wrong – only what is right for your loved one at that time.
- Be aware of health condition and energy levels.
  - Take note if they're getting tired or agitated
  - Some may appreciate shorter, more frequent visits
  - Some may appreciate longer, activity-filled visits
- One or two visitors at a time is easier for most to handle.
  - However, family events can also be special if not too large or long



## 4. Be prepared with conversation and activities

- For conversation, think about their past life and career, current events, or current interests.
- Avoid bringing up painful memories, but if they want to talk about something, lend a listening ear.
- Activities will be highly dependent on the ability and interest of your loved one – we'll cover several ideas in just a bit.



## 5. Begin with a warm greeting

- Start with a smile, no matter how hectic your day.
- Make eye contact and give them a warm hug or handshake.
- If your loved one is in a wheelchair or is seated, make sure to get on their level and spend the visit at eye level with them.

## 6. Create a calm environment

- Make sure you are fully present and not distracted by calls, texts or emails – turn your phone on silent or off.
- Move to a location that isn't noisy or busy if you plan to have a conversation.
- Lower the volume or turn off TVs or radios.
- If able, go for a walk and talk outside.



## 7. Communicate effectively and respectfully

- Address and treat your loved ones as adults no matter their physical or mental abilities.
- If hard of hearing, make sure to slightly raise your voice and enunciate clearly. Never yell or shout.
- Communicate on the same face level, never standing and talking down.
- Make it known you are glad to be with them. Keep conversations positive. Validate and affirm often.



# 8. Show affection appropriately

- Everyone needs positive human touch.
- Depending on your relationship, show affection with hugs, holding hands, or a kind caress on their arm or back.
- Offer a gentle backrub or hand massage.
- Always make sure the affection is wanted and that they are comfortable.



## 9. Be Yourself

- Don't feel obligated to be overly or falsely cheerful.
- Do try to focus on positive and uplifting topics or activities.
- Your presence and the simple act of visiting in itself is appreciated.



## 10. Don't avoid visiting those with dementia

- Dementia residents need visitors too - this can bring them many moments of joy and enrich their life
- Visit and activity recommendations will depend highly on the stage of dementia, level of ability, and interests of your loved one
- Ask staff trained in dementia care, familiar with your loved one for ideas
- Attend Alzheimer's support group for additional ideas, support and resources



# Visiting Day Activity Ideas



# Visiting Day Activity Ideas

- Bring items of interest with you. For example; if your loved one had a love of pets, you could bring your family pet (if allowed) to visit. If he or she had a love of a certain kind of music, bring a CD to play while in the room.
- Talk with your loved one about events going on in the community or family.
- Bring their favorite foods and spices for the visit, but make sure to adhere to the diet recommended by the dietitian and physician.
- Reminisce about past life experiences. Bring in old family photographs. They may enjoy just listening to your memories. If they are able to respond, this may spark a memory.



# Visiting Day Activity Ideas

- Personalize their room to reflect their personality. You could put up sports banners, add family photos, put pictures on the walls, a CD player at bedside with favorite CDs, plants, decorator pillows and pretty afghans, knickknacks that are meaningful to them, lotions and perfumes or colognes, etc.
- Bring a book of their favorite author. Bring flowers from your garden.
- Bring and eat fruits or vegetables from your garden, but make sure to adhere to the diet recommended by the dietitian and physician.
- Don't be afraid to laugh and share humorous stories. Bring funny cartoons and funny stories to share.



# Visiting Day Activity Ideas

- Bring videos or CDs of the religious services from their local church. Share the church bulletin with them.
- Bring the local community paper and read what is happening in their local community. It will help them feel connected.
- Share events happening in your family.
- You could do a makeup session or fix their hair. You can bring pretty nail polish and do a manicure.
- Share a scrapbook or photo album. Read poetry.



# Visiting Day Activity Ideas

- Go for a stroll together. Connecting with nature and being outside is simply wonderful.
- If your loved one is able to take a drive in the car, go on short outings. Suggestions would be: a ride around the community, restaurant, park, church, local store or a pet shop.
- Bring and play games they enjoy, cards, checkers, chess, word puzzles.
- Bring and do crafts they enjoy, such as yarn or cross stitch.



# Visiting Day Activity Ideas

- Bring a video of family events such as weddings, graduations, baseball games, dance recitals, or share a video with them of a movie you enjoyed.
- If they like to read, but now are unable, purchase books on tape.
- Begin a project that you can work on each time you come. For example, if they loved to garden, you could begin a flower press book and dry the flowers. Once they are dried, you could make a collage together and hang the picture on the wall.
- Assist your love one with writing a letter to a friend or relative



# Visiting Day Activity Ideas

- Bring items related to the season, such as pumpkins, poinsettias, spring flowers.
- Decorate their room for the seasons, with decorations and scents specific to the holiday or season. Take down old decorations.
- On their calendar, take a highlighter and mark the date of your next visit. This will remind them that you will be returning soon.



# Questions?

For dementia specific information, join our Alzheimer's support group that meets the last Tuesday of each month at 3:30PM at the Perry Public Library at 1101 Willis Ave in Perry.