

# 9 Stimulating Activities for a Parent with Alzheimer's

Encouraging your parent to maintain their interests and relationships can not only lead to a better quality of life, but it can even reduce the effects of the disease (particularly memory impairment).



If you have a parent living with Alzheimer's, you may have noticed their inclination to withdraw from activities, and even from friends and family. Though this is a common response to the disorder - one that can be particularly painful for you, as activities you once enjoyed together don't seem to interest them anymore - it doesn't mean your quality time together is over.

## Why Stimulating Activities Are Important for Someone with Alzheimer's

Because Alzheimer's can affect senses and behaviour, as well as memory, many people living with the disease feel like they can't pursue their interests. This is because those activities might be too frustrating or overwhelming for them to continue with.

Instead, you can consider modifying the activities they once enjoyed, making them more safe and practical.

Some of the ways stimulating activities can help Alzheimer's patients include:

- Building or rekindling emotional connections with other people
- Make them feel more engaged and confident
- Stir memories that might have previously been forgotten
- Encourage self-expression or self-confidence
- Help ease anxiety or anger that can come with Alzheimer's

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One of the main benefits of engaging in an activity with a parent with Alzheimer's is to help them feel successful. Fail-free activities that provide stimulation allow them to gain a sense of achievement, no matter what. Engaging in an activity like this can help reduce feelings of anxiety, depression, and agitation.

## Tips for Planning Activities

A good place to start is by tailoring activities based on your parent's talents and interests, which can offer fun, creative, and productive ways to spend time with them. Think about what used to interest or excite them, or ask relatives and friends about your parent's passions and strengths. This information will help personalise the activities.

It might take longer for your parent to complete the activities, so try to be patient and to take things slow. If you feel like they're not enjoying the activity, try something different and be realistic about how much can be done at one time.

## Activities for Parents Living with Dementia

The following activities can all be done at home or somewhere familiar to avoid unnecessary stress or anxiety.

### Folding the Laundry

Folding towels together is a great way to busy your parent with a task. It will also help them feel like they're contributing to the household, giving them a sense of achievement and success.

### Bake or Cook

Baking is something so many people enjoy. If your parent used to be a keen cook, then look up simple, easy-to-make recipes and enjoy some time creating something tasty in the kitchen together.

This is a lovely opportunity to engage in conversation, rekindle an old passion (or spark a new one), and give them a sense of achievement when eating the finished product.

### Clean Around the House

To give your parent a sense of accomplishment, ask them to help you with some chores around the house.

These can be as simple as sweeping, dusting, polishing, or even tidying up cushions on the couch. Cleaning is also a great form of gentle exercise and will help keep their bodies, as well as their minds, active.

### Gardening

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Similar to cleaning, ask your parent to join you as you spend time sprucing up the garden. This will help them feel like they're contributing to the running of the house.

Time spent outdoors doing gentle jobs such as weeding, watering the plants, feeding the birds, or even growing their own flowers and herbs will offer them a sense of purpose.

## **Play Games**

In order to engage their mind, you can plan a few simple games to play. A board game or a puzzle is great for stimulation. You can even print your own puzzle with a family picture, which will help them associate with family members and might stimulate some meaningful conversations.

## **Plan a Family Picnic**

A quiet picnic in the garden with members of the family can be an enjoyable way to spend quality time together.

Ask your parent to help with the food, either by making it or choosing what you should have. This way, they'll gain a sense of vital involvement for having helped.

## **Look Through Family Photo Albums**

Take a trip down memory lane. Look through pictures and ask questions about the people or the event. If you don't have any physical albums, you can print some from your phone and go through them together.

## **Join a Book Club**

Joining a book club is a great way to spend time together.

If there isn't one near you, why not start your own with a few friends and family close to your parent? You can ask them to choose the books themselves and discuss why they love the book so much. This will engage their mind as well as offer them a social engagement.

## **Spend Time with Grandchildren**

If you have children then simple activities such as watching a film together, reading a book out loud, drawing, playing with building blocks, or listening to music they enjoy can enhance family time and help build special bonds between the generations.