

Alzheimer's activities

Bedtime Activity

(One-to-one)

Materials

Portable audio tape recorder

Soothing music. This should have a tempo of 60 to 80 beats per minute and no accented beats or percussions. Suitable type of music includes:

- Synthesizer
- Harp
- Piano
- Orchestra
- Slow jazz



Preparation

This is another good example of person-centered activity intervention, and has been shown, in a three-week randomized study published in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, to significantly improve sleep quality and duration in older adults, aged 60 to 83, who had difficulty in sleeping.

Since person-centeredness is key to the effectiveness of this intervention, you need to make sure that it is shaped around the elder's musical preferences. So, ask the person, their relatives, and fellow residents – before the activity – about preferred songs and tunes, and select those that fit the requirements for soothing music reported above.

The activity

Have the elder lie in bed at their usual bedtime. Check, first, that they're wearing comfortable night clothing and that the room's temperature is comfortable.

Switch off the lights and invite the resident to close their eyes.

Play the music and encourage the person to relax.

Since it takes 13 to 35 minutes, in general, for an individual to fall asleep, it's important to play the music for not less than 45 minutes.

Things to consider

If the elders wear a hearing aid, do a listening check before the intervention, to make sure the device is working properly.

Adapted Rhythm "Dancing" Program

Up to three persons with late stage Alzheimer's

This dancing/rhythm activity has been developed by a team of researchers at the University of Kansas, specifically for persons with severe Alzheimer's—who are unable to walk and cannot communicate meaningfully—and their caregivers. It is part of a music therapy program, which has been shown to add quality to the time caregivers and their care recipients spend together, and promote their overall well-being.

Therapeutic benefits

- Promotes non-verbal communication (e.g., gentle touch and eye contact).
- Improves verbal communication.
- Reduces anxiety.
- Improves mood.

What you need

- As many straight chairs as Alzheimer's elders.
- Roller chairs for all caregivers.
- Audio equipment.
- Recordings of the participants' preferred songs.



Note: Ideally, this activity should last approximately 40 minutes and be repeated once a week for at least five weeks, in order to provide participants with long-term beneficial effects.

What to do

The activity starts with the Alzheimer's elders sitting on their chairs, while the music is playing in the background.

Next, the caregivers ask their elders to "dance." With a gentle tone of voice—while smiling and maintaining eye contact—they can say something like: "I would love to dance... please dance with me!"

At this point, the caregivers sit on their roller chairs, close beside their partners, and put their arms around them.

The elders are then encouraged to lean their head on the shoulders of their caregivers, who will gently move from side to side to the rhythm of music.

Variance: This chair dancing exercise can also be done with the caregivers sitting in front of their care recipients. The caregivers hold their partners' hands and move them to the rhythm of music.

Tip: Take a few minutes, before the activity begins, to explain to the Alzheimer's caregivers what they need to do during the session.

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