

Stimulating Activities to Boost Your Brain

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Do your days just fly by? Are you constantly thinking about the next item on your to-do list? Can't get to sleep at night because your brain won't stop? For many people, keeping busy is not an issue at all. Our brain is constantly being stimulated with all of the incoming data from the world around us. In fact, it would be fair to say that it would be good for many of us to stop and smell the roses just to give our brain a break!

For a person living with dementia, however, life may slow down considerably as abilities become affected. Getting enough mental stimulation will be important for both the person's brain health and quality of life. However, being able to keep yourself busy, if you have dementia, may not come easy. Your natural ability to initiate a task, become engaged with a hobby, or to participate in an activity may become altered.

As a care partner, it may be up to you to help fill the hours of the day for the person you care for. If this task seems daunting and you are wondering what to do, think about the person and the interests that they have. Have they always enjoyed playing cards? Are they a natural organizer? A talented cook? It isn't just about filling the hours so that the day goes by. It is about creating meaningful activities for the person so their day has a focus and their life feels purposeful.

There are many ways to help a person stay mentally stimulated. Here are five ideas for you to consider:

1. Arts and Crafts – An art project can be a wonderful form of self-expression. Before you say that the person you care for is not artistic in anyway, you may want to give it a chance! Many people discover artistic talents later in life when they have the time to pursue something new. There are many inexpensive arts and crafts kits available in the stores so you don't have to spend a lot of money to experiment with finding something that the person enjoys.
2. Puzzles – Puzzles are a popular past-time and with the variety of puzzles available, it is easy to find options for a wide range of abilities. There are even puzzles available online where you can drag and drop pieces into place! If the person has always been computer savvy, doing puzzles online may appeal to them.
3. Cooking – Finding a new recipe, making a grocery list, and preparing a meal can provide many hours of rewarding activity! You can help a person prepare their family favorites or explore the cookbooks for new recipes to try.

4. Reading the newspaper or magazines – Staying up-to-date with current events is a productive way to spend some time. You can help the person stay connected with their community by bringing the daily newspaper and creating conversation around articles that you think will be of interest to them.
5. Cleaning and organizing – If a person has always enjoyed cleaning or organizing things around the house, you are in luck! You can help them clean the pantry, tidy the linen closet, or sort out the junk drawer. There are few things more rewarding than a clean and tidy home!

Everyone needs to feel pleasure each day. Pleasure may be derived from completing a puzzle or a craft, or from cooking a delicious meal. Whatever it may be, break down the task into manageable steps, support the person as they complete the task, and enjoy the smile on their face as they feel the satisfaction of another job well done!