

## **Coping with COVID-19** *Activities and Resources*

Social distancing is the best way to protect yourself, the person you care for, and your family/friends. The CDC defines social distancing as avoiding crowded public spaces, gatherings of 10 or more people, and maintaining a distance of 6 feet from those who live outside of your immediate household.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html>

Many cities and some states are putting in place stay at home orders to further reduce the spread of COVID-19. The goal of these orders is to ensure that as many people as possible stay at their place of residence as much as possible. This is especially important for those who fall under the high-risk category for severe illness associated with COVID-19. Those considered high-risk include anyone over the age of 65, anyone with serious underlying health conditions, those who are pregnant, people with HIV, and people with asthma.

For more tips about caregiving and COVID-19 from the Alzheimer's Association, click [here](#). This is also where you'll find information about Association programs and services that are still available to you.

This is a challenging time for everyone, especially those with memory loss and their care partners, families, and friends. To address the difficulties associated with staying home and being isolated from others, we have created a list of activities and coping strategies to help you through this time.

As always, establishing a daily routine and having activities available will be helpful for people living with dementia and their caregivers. Below are some ideas for activities that can help round out your daily schedule. Read to the end for tips on how to avoid conflict between caregivers and those with memory loss.

### **Virtual/Online Activities**

- Connect with family and friends through FaceTime, Skype, Google Hangouts, or other video communication platforms. Social media is another way to connect with family and friends, such as Facebook, Instagram, or the Nextdoor app for connecting with neighbors. If you want help getting someone started who isn't familiar with these platforms, [here](#) is helpful information.
- Complete the 2020 census! It only takes a few minutes. You can find it [here](#). You can also fill out a paper form that will be mailed to your home, or you can complete the census by phone by calling 844-330-2020.
- St. Louis culture/arts institutions
  - [Here](#) you can see a livestream of Penguin and Puffin Coast from the St. Louis Zoo
  - The Missouri Botanical Garden has a [YouTube channel](#) & so does the [Shaw Nature Reserve](#)

- The St. Louis Art Museum offers their [audio guides to past exhibits](#) and videos of [exhibition & collection features](#)
- The Missouri History Museum offers [History at Home](#)
- Visit the zoo online! Many zoos have livestreams of their animals so visitors can see what the animals are doing in real time.
  - [here](#) is a link to the live cams at the San Diego Zoo
  - The Cincinnati zoo provides a daily livestreamed “[Home Safari](#).” experience at 2 p.m. CST. The recorded programs can be viewed on [their YouTube channel](#)

You can also find SNR here:

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- Meet the Forest Park Owl Man & get to know the horned owls of Forest Park from a well-known naturalist. He has both a [blog](#) (lots of info & photos) and a [YouTube](#) channel with his great videos.
- Visit museums- [here](#) is a list of museums offering virtual tours you can do from home.
- [Explore.org](#) features livestream cameras of nature...everything from eagles nesting to the Northern Lights to dog and cat rescue projects. They also have livestream highlight videos and free films, including Nature Meditations and Zen Dens, which might be calming for caregivers and people with dementia, alike.
- See what’s blooming at botanical gardens. [Here](#) are some great virtual garden tours.
- National parks also have livestreams that feature nature and wildlife. You can find a list of livestreams available [here](#).
- Go to the opera- the Metropolitan Opera offers nightly opera streams & recorded programs [here](#).
- Explore phone/tablet apps that would be fun for the person with memory loss. Choose apps based on the interests and ability level of the person you care for. Call your local library for ideas. Here's a website that has some ideas too: <https://keepingbusy.com/learning-center/ipad-dementia-apps/>
- Try an online exercise program to stay active while stuck indoors.
  - The National Institutes on Aging (NIA) has great ideas to help you jump-start or increase your at-home [exercise program](#), including videos you can follow. If you’re not an internet user, call the NIA at 1-800-222-2225 and ask them to mail you a copy of their publication called *Exercise and Physical Activity*.
  - The YMCA also has a number of different classes online and some are specifically created for older adults. Browse their videos [here](#).
  - YouTube also provides a wide variety of workout videos from different instructors. Search an activity you are interested in, such as yoga or strength building, and browse different videos to find which workout suits you best.
- Watch movies or TV shows on various streaming platforms, such as Netflix, Hulu, YouTube or Amazon Video.

- Here's a list of [movies](#) that might be most enjoyed by people with dementia
- Classic game shows may be a good option for people with dementia, and many are available on YouTube. Here's a [list](#) with some ideas to get you started.
- For sports fans, here are some options:
  - Major League Baseball is offering [classic games](#) you can watch for free on their YouTube channel.
  - The NFL is offering free access to their [NFL Game Pass](#) that will last through the end of May. You can watch all pre-season, regular season and post-season games from the last 10 years, as well as many special features. Requires that you create an account.
  - The NBA is offering a free preview of their [NBA League Pass](#) through April 22. It allows you to watch all this season's games & a selection of classic games & other content. Requires that you create an account.
- Take an online class. There are a large number of free online education resources, and many are available at no cost.
  - Yale's popular course on happiness is now being offered free online [here](#).
  - Browse thousands of free courses in a wide range of topics on [Class Central](#).

### **Activities to do in the Home**

- [Activity ideas from the Alzheimer's Association](#)
- If video communication like FaceTime, Google Hangouts or Skype aren't available to you, schedule phone calls with family members and friends to keep in touch. Keeping a regular schedule of phone visits can become part of a daily routine, which is beneficial for people with dementia.
- Listen to your favorite music! Listen to music on its own, dance around, or have it on in the background while you do other activities.
- Use the time to reminisce and record stories and memories. This could be done by writing it down, making videos, or getting creative with collages or scrapbooking with family photos.
- Cook or bake together- use favorite recipes or try something new. Baking is a great way to get someone with memory loss involved in the process. Choose a recipe like making bread or cookies where you can use your hands to work the dough.
- Read aloud to each other- choose favorite poems or short stories.
- Listen to podcasts- there are a wide variety of podcasts in many different entertaining genres. These can be found on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or other podcast platforms. [Here](#) you can find a list of podcasts from Sunrise Senior Living's blog.
- Do tabletop activities such as puzzles, Legos, folding laundry, or creating a sensory table with items with different colors, textures, or scents.

- Do crafts such as coloring, painting, molding playdough, knitting, making jewelry with beading, using stamps, or nature printing with leaves or flowers from your home.
- [Here](#) is a link to an *Activities for the Mind, Body, and Soul* e-booklet that has a number of activity ideas to do at home. The e-book comes with a calendar to keep track of what activities you have done so far. You can find it [here](#).

### **Getting out of the House**

- Go for a walk outside and enjoy nature. Just remember to stay at least six feet away from others at all times.
- Get out in the garden! This is a great time of year to start working outside. If you don't have a yard, you can garden using window boxes or containers on your porch/patio. For gardening help or ideas on what to do in the garden, visit the Missouri Botanical Garden's home gardening center [here](#).
- Sit outside and enjoy the fresh air. Spend time listening to the sounds of nature, look for newly blooming flowers, and see what trees are starting to sprout their leaves.
- If you have plants in your yard, take some cuttings and create small arrangements to place around the house.
- Take extended car rides to spend time away from home safely. Drive through scenic landscapes or parks that allow cars, such as [Lone Elk Park](#) near St. Louis.
- Have a picnic - pack a lunch for your extended car ride. Find a place to park that is peaceful and enjoy the view. If you have a yard or patio, you can have picnics at home, too.

### **Support & Additional Resources**

- **Alzheimer's Association**
  - Call our **24/7 Helpline** at **800.272.3900** to assist with issues you're facing or to find helpful resources. You don't have to have a crisis--or even a question--to use our Helpline. You can call anytime you just want to talk with someone who understands the challenges of living with dementia and caregiving for someone with dementia.
  - **Care Consultations** are an in-depth, free, personalized service for individuals and families facing the many challenges associated with dementia. A care consultation is an opportunity to meet by phone with an Alzheimer's Association Care Consultant who will help you:
    - Better understand the disease
    - Manage care
    - Cope with stress
    - Learn about community resources that can help you
    - Make more informed decisions

Family members who don't live together are often able to be included via telephone conference call. People with early-stage memory loss are encouraged to participate if they want to be part of the planning process.

A care consultation is designed to provide you and your family with support from pre-diagnosis to end-of-life. Care consultants are available for meetings over the phone to offer support and resources. To schedule a Care Consultation, call our 24/7 helpline and request a Care Consultation with someone from your local chapter or call 314.801.0420 to have someone contact you to schedule your appointment.

- **Support Groups:** Most of the Association's support groups have moved to telephone or other virtual platforms. Use them! You're not limited by geography now, so it's much easier to find a group that fits into your schedule. Visit the Association's [Community Resource Finder](#) or call the 24/7 Helpline for information at **800.272.3900**.
  - **AlzConnected:** Available 24/7, AlzConnected is a group of message boards for caregivers and people living with early stage memory loss. They allow you to communicate with others who are "walking the walk" alongside you. There is a general caregiver message board, as well as boards specifically for spouses/partners, people living with dementia, people impacted by younger-onset dementia, those who have lost someone to the disease, the Spanish-speaking community, and the LGBT+/ally community.
- Call the free Institute on Aging [Friendship Line](#) (both a crisis intervention hotline and a "warmline" for non-emergency emotional support calls) at 800.971.0016. The Friendship Line even makes regular outgoing calls to any older adult who has depression, loneliness, or is feeling isolated. If the person with memory loss can still converse on the phone, they might really enjoy receiving a call. Isolated caregivers (that's all caregivers, these days) could benefit, as well.
  - Teepa Snow is a dementia educator who has a YouTube channel with a number of videos discussing issues surrounding dementia. You can find her channel [here](#).

### **Avoiding Conflict**

- Avoid arguing with the person experiencing memory loss. Arguing with someone who has dementia can often make matters worse. Try tools like redirection or validation instead. You can find communication tips for the different stages of dementia [here](#).
- Read and use the [Ten Strategies](#) from the Family Caregiver Alliance.
- Use key phrases, such as, "You're right," "I'm sorry," "We're in this together," "That was my fault," "I know this is hard." And the best all-purpose response: "Um-Hmmm." Although these responses may not reflect how you feel, they validate the feelings of the person with memory loss and could help calm the situation.
- Turn it into a game! At the beginning of the day, the caregiver and the person with memory loss each start with their own bowl or small box of cotton balls. Whenever there's frustration, throw a cotton ball (or two or three!) up in the

air--but not at one another. When either bowl is empty, it's time for each of you to take a 5 minute time-out!

- Check your environment for things that could trigger frustration or agitation. Make sure lighting is adequate and limit background noise, such as the TV. Creating a calm and comfortable environment can help reduce agitation for those with memory loss.
- Recognize when you're starting to feel frustrated and try to intervene and use a technique to calm yourself down. Learn more about handling frustration and caregiver stress [here](#).
- Humor! Try to bring humor into the situation whenever possible.