

Beyond Activities: Creative Engagement for People Living at Home

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Objectives

- » The importance of Engagement vs Activity
- » Activity domains
- » Why creativity matters
- » Designing engagements
- » Activity modification
- » Keys for success
 - » Importance of routine

Engagement vs. Activity

Engagement

- » Makes a connection
- » Creates joy
- » Has a purpose
- » Promotes independence
- » Respects what the person CAN DO
- » Fosters success

Activity is simply doing something whereas engagement occupies a person's attention.

We want to ENGAGE

Change the focus
from the **task**
before us to the
person with us!



All activities are opportunities for engagement

Example: eating breakfast



Try to:

- Make a connection
- Create joy
- Have a purpose
- Promote independence
- Respect what the person CAN DO
- Enable success

Example: oral care

Partner *with*
your person
rather than
DOING the task
for him or her



Example: getting dressed



**Allow your
person to
make
CHOICES**

Activity Domains – Try to include all of them in your daily routine

- ▶ Physical – Anything that makes us use our body
- ▶ Insightful – Whatever involves thinking or is spiritual in nature
- ▶ Social – Being around and interacting with others
- ▶ Relaxing – Resting and refreshing

Most activities engage in more than one way

Example: yard work

- Raking or sweeping leaves
- Pull weeds
- Pick up sticks
- Set out the garbage
- Plant, water, or pick flowers, vegetables, or herbs

**PHYSICAL,
PURPOSEFUL,
INSIGHTFUL
SENSORY**



The importance of creativity

- Essential to the health of the human spirit
- Employs multiple activity domains and different parts of the brain working together
- A way to express oneself without words
- Creativity engages us and brings us pleasure

“When individuals with dementia are creating, they have transcended memory loss and can see something happening before them.”

Patricia Baines, Alzheimer's Association, Australia, September 2007

Memories in the Making® an art program for people with dementia



Restores a means
of creative self-
expression to
people who have
lost other avenues.

If it's paint on paper, it's a painting



There's no right or wrong way of painting.

We encourage the artists to make whatever marks come naturally to them.

The process of painting is more important than the finished painting

Anyone who can hold a brush can paint



Bill was a TV repairman; Chuck was a radiologist. Neither had ever painted before, but both found purpose, joy and connection in painting.

What other activities can be creative and engage your person throughout the day?

1. What was your person's occupation?
1. What did your person do for enjoyment?
1. What made him or her happy?

How might we modify these activities to be meaningful and appropriate to their skill level?

Example – Louise was a housewife

Louise spent the sixties and seventies raising her four children. She was happy to be a homemaker, was an excellent cook, and enjoyed gardening and sewing. After her children left home, she volunteered at the library and took up quilting.

A widow, Louise now lives with her oldest daughter and it's been hard on both of them.

What types of engagements might be meaningful and appropriate for Louise?

“A man may work from sun to sun but a woman’s work is never done.”

- Handling or organizing fabrics, yarn, buttons
- Simple chores: folding laundry, ironing, matching socks, running a vacuum, dusting, or helping with meal preparation
- Clipping coupons or recipes
- Reading magazines
- Painting or simple crafts
- Meeting with a group of friends

Activity modification

- ▶ Decide that the quality of the engagement is more important than the outcome
- ▶ Take an inventory of the steps and the skills required
- ▶ Reduce the number of steps
- ▶ Offer only as much assistance as the person needs
- ▶ Focus on creating connection, purpose and joy
- ▶ Take time and don't rush
- ▶ End on a high note

Example: Making Muffins



Which of these 15 steps can Louise do?

1. Discuss what to bake
2. Find the recipe
3. Get out the supplies and utensils
4. Measure ingredients
5. Add ingredients to batter
6. Stir mixture
7. Taste batter
8. Put paper liners in muffin pan
9. Pour batter into muffin pan
10. Put pan in oven
11. Set timer
12. Smell baking muffins
13. Test for doneness
14. Remove from oven
15. Eat

Creating Engagement at Home

- ▶ Use as many previously enjoyed engagements as possible, adjusting them for success
- ▶ Add a few new things – don't let your expectations of who they are stop you
- ▶ Involve others to make it more social (or give the care partner a break)
- ▶ Get creative – experiment until you find something that works
- ▶ Technology is your friend

Example: Hank drove a truck

Hank was a cross-country trucker, so he wasn't home often. When he was home, he liked to be outside. He lived in the country and there was always something that needed doing around the house. Happiest by himself, Hank tended to avoid social situations.

Hank uses a walker and has difficulty getting around. He is cared for by his second wife, who worries that he just sits in front of the TV all day.

How might we engage Hank?

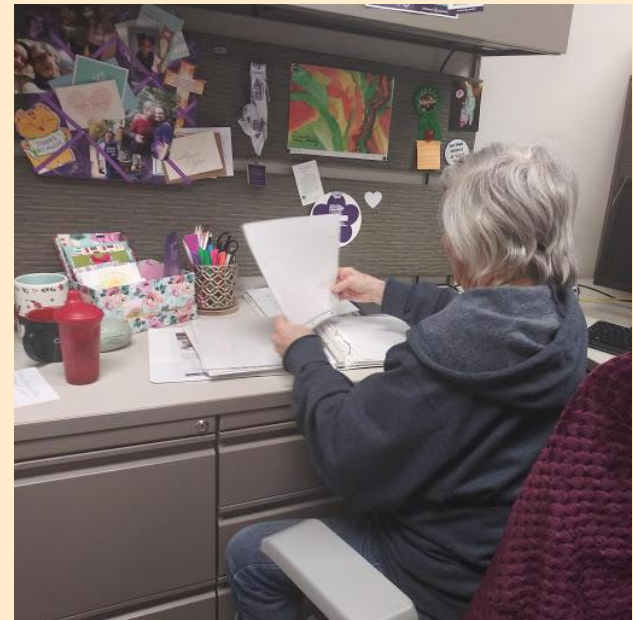
Meet Hank where he is and celebrate what he can do

- Go outside
- Take a drive
- Listen to his favorite songs
- Have him help with meal preparation
- Sort nuts and bolts; sand wood; paint

Consider the activity domains: physical, social, insightful and relaxing

Get creative

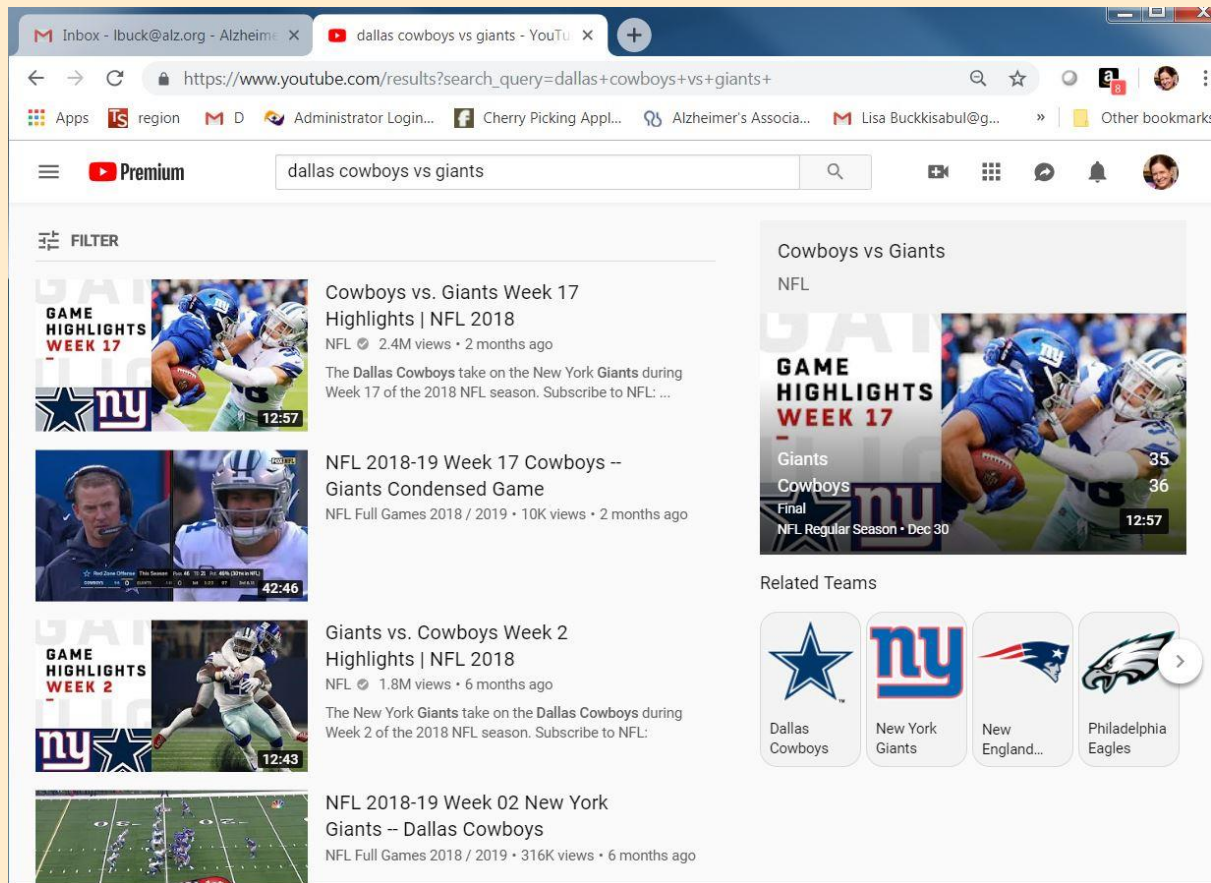
- Create rummage boxes, baskets or bags. Assemble a collection of objects that are meaningful to the person.
- “Office work” could be anything done sitting at a desk. Get ideas from your office supply store.



Get creative

- Buy used appliances at a thrift store and have your person dis-assemble them
- Visit Youtube.com to find your person's favorite TV show or a game that his team won.
- Gather photographs or objects that remind your person of their history and solicit stories from him or her.

Watch television purposefully



Hook your laptop to the television!

Music, dancing and art



People with dementia live in the present



Make those moments have purpose,
connection and joy

Stick to a routine

- When thinking about how to organize the day, consider:
 - What was your person's routine before dementia?
 - Which activities work best? Which don't? Why?
 - Are there times when there is too much going on or too little to do?
 - Were spontaneous activities enjoyable or did they create anxiety and confusion?

Don't be concerned about filling every minute with an activity. Your person needs balance of activity and rest.

Sample Daily Plan

Morning:

- Rise and shine, engage through personal care
- Conversation over breakfast
- Physical or insightful activity

Afternoon:

- Social lunch
- Relaxing activity
- Household chores
- Creative engagement

Evening:

- Dinner preparation
- Share a meal
- Relax and reminisce
- Engagement through personal care

Am I doing it right?

- ▶ Watch the person – are they “connected”?
- ▶ Are they smiling or concentrating?
- ▶ Are they less restless?
- ▶ Have nap or sleep patterns improved?
- ▶ Is it better received or performed after doing it a few days?

Resources

Need ideas?

Call the Alzheimer's Association
24/7 Helpline at 800-272-3900

[www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/
daily-care/activities](http://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/activities)

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