Personalizing Your Approach With Activities and Engagement

WITH KAREN WHEELOCK AND CRYSTAL LONG
OF HOME AGAIN ASSISTED LIVING AND MEMORY CARE

Who we are

• Karen Wheelock, Life Enrichment Coordinator
  • 10+ years in the senior care industry
  • Mother had Alzheimer’s for 8 years
  • 3 national certifications in dementia care

• Crystal Long, Director of Training and Compliance
  • 21+ years in senior care
  • Created and implemented Home Again’s Thrive Program
  • Numerous state dementia certifications

Objectives

• Learn the difference between activities and Life Enrichment
• Learn how to collect information about the people you care for that will help enrich their lives
• Put this information into action, no matter the level of cognitive ability
• Benefits of Life Enrichment to both residents and families
Activities vs Life Enrichment

- What do you think of when you hear the word "activities"?

Life Enrichment

- Digging into personal history and interests
- May be small groups, one-on-one, or self-directed
- Things you are already doing:
  - reminiscing
  - aroma therapy
  - socializing
  - promoting the highest level of independence
WHY Life Enrichment vs Activities

- We are encouraging what the resident is capable of and enjoys
- Life enrichment supports the resident as a whole (spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, psychosocial)
- An activity can distract someone, whereas life enrichment can fulfill them

Collecting information

- Personal History
  - Career, family, preferred name, hometown, etc.
- Lifestyle/Therapeutic preferences
  - Music, food, smells, hobbies, extroverted or introverted, comfort with large groups vs small groups, etc.
- Behavioral expressions
  - Aggression, anxiety, repetition, sundowning, confusion, paranoia, etc.
- Potential Triggers
  - Shift change, pain, time of day, interacting with certain people, noise, TV, etc.

How to apply information for Life Enrichment
How to apply information for Life Enrichment

- Best time to get information about personal history
  - Ask questions about past, interests, etc
  - Ask follow up questions to the info you have collected already.
- Help them feel included and fulfilled
- Simplify activities to fit their abilities if needed

Engaging with people in early stages

Adapting to decreasing cognitive levels
ACTIVITY!

How did you do??

Engaging with people in middle stages
- Try not to “quiz” them
- Allowing time to respond
- Expecting what they’re capable of today, not in the past
Engaging with people in later stages

• Use the 5 senses

  📚 SIGHT 🌿 SENSES 🍂 TOUCH 🎧 HEARING 🍋 TASTE

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Engaging with people in later stages

• Scent
  • Use lotions when doing hand massages
  • Use essential oil diffusers
  • Bake some yummy-smelling treats
  • Bring in fresh flowers

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Engaging with people in later stages

• Sight
  • Look at books with brightly colored pictures in them
  • Look at photo albums of resident
  • Watch ambient videos of nature, fireplaces, etc
  • Go outside on a nice day or sit by a window and look outside

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Engaging with people in later stages

- **Touch**
  - Feel different fabrics
  - Hand massages
  - Feel different familiar objects
  - Use sensory objects like a pop-it, stress ball, or fidget blanket
  - Hold hands

- **Sound**
  - Music: familiar and/or calming
  - Sounds of nature
  - Read books, scripture, newspaper articles to them
  - Use a calm, gentle tone of voice

- **Taste**
  - Cook favorite foods
  - Different flavored drinks
  - Ice cream, pudding
  - Texture tasting if safe
Activities with purpose

- Makes them feel useful. Many people in this generation are "helpers" and may feel helpless right now.
  - Wiping down tables
  - Folding towels
  - Sweeping floor
  - Arranging flowers
  - Creating something for others
Celebrating resident successes!

Benefits seen by all involved

- Residents – less agitation, reactive communication
- Staff – feel more connected to who they are caring for, will have an easier day because residents are more content
- Families – peace of mind knowing that their loved one is being treated as an individual and not just by diagnosis.