



# 101 Things to do with dementia patients

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## Cognitive Stimulation Activities

- Sort coins or buttons by size, color or shape
- Put together jigsaw puzzles with large pieces
- Play simple board games like checkers, dominoes or tic-tac-toe
- Leaf through magazines and discuss the pictures
- Reminisce while looking through old photo albums
- Play card games like war, go fish or memory/concentration
- Listen to music, sing songs, play simple instruments like tambourines or maracas
- Do crossword or word search puzzles
- Play 'I spy' describing objects in the room
- Have guests over to socialize if the person is up for it

## **Sensory Activities**

- Look at nature books with rich illustrations or through the window
- Listen to nature sounds recordings of birds, waves or wind
- Engage senses with scented lotions, Fresh flowers, favorite treats
- Stroke or brush a pet, or watch aquarium fish
- Organize beads, coins or textured fabrics by touch
- Give a hand massage with scented lotion
- Walk barefoot on grass, sand or textured mats
- Sit outside and observe surroundings, nature or people

## **Creative Arts Activities**

- Color in adult coloring books or blank paper
- Paint simple pictures with watercolors or acrylics
- Work with modeling clay, playdough or finger paint
- Glue items like pasta, beans, felt onto paper
- Decorate cards to give family and friends
- Weave yarn, ribbons or strips of fabric through cardboard slits
- Make simple flower arrangements from yard or purchased stems
- Play relaxing nature CDs or put flowers/plants around room while creating art

## **Physical Exercise Activities**

- Do seated exercises like marching legs or arm raises
- Use exercise bands for resistance training
- Play balloon volleyball while seated
- Toss/catch large balls or balloons
- Walk outdoors or in malls for people watching
- Do chair yoga adapted for dementia patients
- Dance to favorite music during activity times
- Walk on marked nature trails through parks/gardens
- Participate in specialized dementia exercise classes
- Ride adult tricycles outdoors with supervision

## Reminiscing Activities

- Discuss past personal experiences and memories
- Cook or bake favorite childhood recipes
- Listen to music popular when they were young
- Watch classic old movies and discuss memories triggered
- Read classic books or stories they enjoyed as children
- Look through high school or wedding photo albums
- Talk about fond memories of parenting and grandparenting
- Share cultural traditions around holidays food or customs
- Visit childhood neighborhoods and share memory stories

## Gardening Activities

- Plant flower seeds in pots and track growth daily
- Arrange freshly cut flowers from garden in vases
- Water houseplants or garden plants
- Prune safe soft-leaved houseplants or outdoor bushes
- Pick fruits/veggies from garden or fruit trees
- Arrange colorful fallen leaves into collages
- Grow indoor herb garden with basil, oregano, parsley
- Press colorful fallen leaves in telephone books
- Make birdfeeders from pinecones coated with peanut butter and birdseed

## **Cooking and Baking Activities**

- Make no-bake cookies, rice crispy treats or fruit pies
- Measure out ingredients for easy cold salads
- Snap green beans, peel potatoes or carrots
- Whisk ingredients in a bowl or mix cookie dough
- Set or neatly decorate tables for meals
- Dry dishes or polish cutlery after meals
- Mix up cold beverages like lemonade or fruit smoothies
- Prepare fruits for fruit salad such as washing apples
- Roll pie crust dough or knead bread dough

## Organizing, Sorting and Folding

- Fold towels and napkins from the laundry
- Match socks from the laundry pile
- Organize drawers or shelves by rearranging items
- Sort beads, buttons, coins or paperclips by size/color
- Stack plates or frisbees into neat piles
- Count out loud objects like beans or stickers into groups
- Sort a deck of playing cards by suit or number
- Replace items into the correct home spaces after use



## Simple Crafts

- String large beads, pool noodles or straw pieces
- Cut shapes out of thick craft foam with scissors
- Glue popsicle sticks into picture frames and decorate
- Stick stickers onto paper to make scenes or designs
- Tear colorful magazines into small pieces for collages
- Color with sidewalk chalk on pavement or paper
- Hole punch shapes from colored paper
- Decorate ready-made cards for various occasions
- Apply stickers to envelopes and paper lunch bags

## Household Chore Activities

- Sweep floors with a small broom and dustpan
- Use a spray bottle of water to gently water houseplants
- Polish shoes or furniture using a soft brush and nontoxic polish
- Wipe off tables or kitchen counters
- Pair socks from the clean laundry
- Fold dish towels or napkins from the laundry
- Load dishes carefully into the dishwasher after meals
- Hand-wash plastic dishes at a sink with warm soapy water
- Simple toy cleanup tasks putting items into bins

## One-on-One Social Visiting

- Look through past photo albums together
- Receive hand massages with lotion
- Have nails filed and painted by volunteers
- Do their hair, styling it gently how they like
- Apply makeup slowly and carefully if desired
- Enjoy aromatherapy hand massages
- Listen to calming music CDs while resting
- Have religious passages read aloud if requested
- Have a 'tea party' with tea in real china cups
- Pet therapy sessions with approved animals

## **Outings**

- Go along on brief errand outings to stores
- Take community dementia day program outings to gardens, museums or libraries

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