



# Penn

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Penn Memory Center welcomes you to  
*Caring for the Caregiver:*  
people caring for so

# Questions? Contact:

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# Caring for the Caregiver: Week 5

## **Activity Engagement**

*Increasing pleasant activities to improve mood and  
reduce troubling behaviors*

## Why is engagement important?

- It decreases agitation and challenging behaviors such as wandering and aggression
- It decreases anxiety and depression
- It improves sleep
- It helps maintain brain health
- After an initial investment, it frees up caregiver “on duty” time
- It increases feelings of bondedness between caregiver and care recipient and can help balance out less pleasant interactions

# Choosing an engaging activity – how to start



- Did the person work? If so, what was their job?
- What were their hobbies; what did they do for fun?
- What did they and I do for fun together?
- What is their role in our family or what were their household responsibilities?



# Tips for adapting activities

- Scale down the activity.
- Break activity into smaller, manageable chunks.
- Focus on roles and feelings.

# Helpful Tips:

- Focus on process rather than results.
- Choose activities that can be done in short bursts.
- Have a back-up.
- Have materials set up in advance and keep environment distraction-free.
- Change your approach – don't ask!
- Make activities social.
- Don't force them to participate, but try again later.

# Activity Suggestions:

- Listen to or play music
- Dance
- Look through old photos
- Use narration – ask about old family stories
- Cook a simple meal or bake cookies
- Do a jigsaw puzzle or word search
- Listen to a book or short story on tape
- Read poetry out loud
- Paint, draw or collage



# Activity Suggestions, Con't.:

- Go for a nature walk
- Do a relaxed exercise video, such as chair yoga
- Plant and tend to house or yard plants
- Join memory cafes in person or online
- Spend time with pets or children
- Sorting: coins, silverware, tools, etc.
- Fold laundry
- Wash dishes
- Look at magazines
- Rummage box

# My ideas for activity engagement

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

# Homework

Homework trackers can be found in the website under Week 5. If you need help locating them, email me at [felicia.greenfield@pennmedicine.upenn.edu](mailto:felicia.greenfield@pennmedicine.upenn.edu)

- + ● 1. Complete Weekly Mood Tracker – record daily mood for each day this week
- 2. Practice your signal breath and rate stress level before and after your practice once a day.
- 3. Practice the 20 Breaths exercise once a day.
- 4. Complete 1 different 6-Column Thought Records this week.
- 5. Evaluate your ongoing communication style.
- 6. Practice at least one 20-minute body scan.
- 7. Listen to a piece of music at least 3 times this week and document how it makes you feel.
- 8. Try engaging your loved one in a meaningful activity at least twice this week.