

# Techniques for Maintaining Skills and Abilities

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## The Healthy Body

The basis to maintain a good memory and skills is by having a healthy mind and body. You can't expect your brain to function at its best if you don't take care of the body that feeds it. Make sure you and your loved one:

- Eat a Brain Boosting Diet - Make sure key vitamins are in your diet; omega-3's, folic acid, vitamin B12, and antioxidants. These improve the sharpness of the mind. Follow the Mediterranean diet.
- Drink plenty of water - Most of us are dehydrated and don't even know it. When you don't drink enough water, your body and mind become weak and tired. Water makes red blood cells more active and gives you more energy.
- Moderate exercise increases oxygen to the brain. Try chair yoga and breathing exercises.
- Get enough sleep - During sleep, your brain recharges itself. Studies have shown that your brain needs sleep to change new memories into long-term memories.



## The Healthy Mind

Use it or Lose it!

Did anyone take a second language in high school or college? Or a musical instrument? How proficient are you now?

It's not too late to reboot your brain!

Activities that require using your hands are a great way to exercise your brain.

- Playing a musical instrument, juggling, ping pong, making pottery, knitting, or needlework are activities that exercise the brain by challenging hand-eye coordination, sequencing, and creativity.
- Simple math problems, gardening, coloring, bingo, and bowling are all prime examples of activities that boost the mind.

You may not realize that there is a therapeutic purpose in all these activities.

Our typical day at ActivCare follows these main principles:

1- Routine

2- Choices

3- Mix of Physical and Mental Activity



You can help your loved one with Alzheimer's to maintain their skills and abilities by encouraging and providing these active outlets for them.

- They may not be able to create an oil painting anymore but they can color velvet art with markers.
- They may not be able to run a marathon but they can go for a walk with you in the neighborhood.

They may need more assistance with ADL care and the same principles apply.

- Teeth brushing
- Getting dressed

At times it is necessary to do things quickly, but when possible try to take the time to make it an activity you can do together.

We want to encourage them to do as much as they can do for as long as possible.

## Keeping Notes

Often it's a challenge to engage and receive cooperation from our loved ones with Alzheimer's.

We want to keep track of our challenges and successes of our day to better detect what is causing different behaviors.

When a person with Alzheimer's disease acts a certain way it is usually a reaction.

They may become agitated if they are overwhelmed.

They may withdraw if they are feeling defeated or afraid.

Considerations:

- The time of day
- The noise level
- The temperature
- The interaction

## Keeping Notes

- It's helpful to keep a journal to refer to after a period of time, this is especially helpful for doctor's appointments.
- You then can predict the routine and anticipate how to avoid it. This will help with reducing their anxiety and your stress.

example: Your loved one gets restless and irritated every evening after dinner while you wash the dishes. You now can plan a long walk or put on his favorite music program right at the end of dinner to avoid this and wash the dishes later.



## Challenges for you

- Stop and smell the roses...Literally! Schedule the time for you alone and together.
- Use all of your senses throughout the day.
- Challenge yourself -
  - Write left handed, close yours eyes while showering, listen to a movie in a different language

Keep you and your loved one active and involved. Use your skills and give them the opportunity to use theirs for as long as possible.

Key tips to maintain their skills and abilities:

- 1- At their level
- 2- Set up for success
- 3- Accomplishment



Questions?

Thank you!