

## **Making a Date**

*From "A Different Visit: Activities for Caregivers and their Loved Ones with Memory Impairments"*

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Give someone a date to look forward to on a regular basis.

Remember when someone last called and arranged for a date with you? No matter where you went, you felt very special because someone expressed a desire to spend time with you. Would you like to join your loved one for a night out, maybe dinner or a quick stop at a local coffee shop? Older adults with memory impairments may not initiate dates anymore because it has become too complicated to do the inviting. However, that does not mean that you cannot arrange for a date with them. This next activity is about giving your family member a date to look forward to on a regular basis. *We have added adaptations to the original activity in blue, to encourage creative solutions during times of visitor restrictions in care communities. Original text from the activity is still included so you can save this activity idea after restrictions are lifted. If you are a care partner in a residential community, could you use this guide to help a resident create an invitation for their family member, with your support?*



### **HOW TO**

1. When we refer to a "date" we are really referring to a designated time to be together. This could be a meal or a trip to a coffee shop, but it really can be anything. Choose two activities that you and your loved one may have enjoyed in the past. Think of activities that would still be appropriate now and could be accomplished without frustration. Some date ideas might be going to a library or sunroom to read a favorite book together, sharing a grandchild's report card, looking at a picture album, attending a concert or a local play, or maybe having a beer at a local pub (if it's medically allowed). *Even if these activities were typically done in person, with a little creativity they can still be shared virtually. For example, you can still read a book together or share photos through a screen. Care community staff can be recruited to help provide materials to your loved one (i.e. you can provide a copy of a favorite book that a staff member deliver to make sure you both have a copy of a favorite book).*
2. Present your two choices for a date and invite your loved one to choose between the two.
3. Set a regular time and once a week or once a month, you and your loved one go on your date. You can change the place that you go or what you do, but the point is to do something special on an ongoing basis. This gives your family member something special to look forward to and focus on. If they cannot remember the date, then it is a nice surprise when you go to take them. If your family member cannot leave the house or facility, set something up for them there. (See adaptations section.) *Be sure to coordinate with care partners and staff to ensure that a means of video or phone communication will be available. Some communities have designated times when video communication is available, or set times when visitors are permitted.*

## TIPS

- Food can always add a special flare to a visit. If you decide to stay in, a beverage and a favorite snack are always good beginnings. How about an afternoon tea at the kitchen table with a selection of different flavors to choose from? *Can care community staff help your loved one prepare a favorite beverage or snack to enjoy during the date? If you are a care partner, perhaps letting a family know what beverages are available will let them prepare a similar beverage or snack ahead of time.*

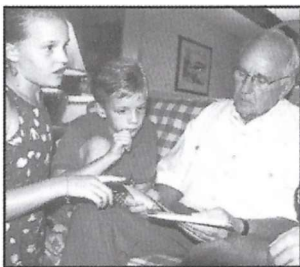
- Don't forget to include friends and extended family members in your dates. This does not have to be a one-on-one interaction between you and your family member. It's actually a perfect opportunity for others to be able to visit without having to plan. Grandchildren are always wonderful additions to a visit. They can be very creative.



An older grandchild can share a lunch or a favorite story.

- Plan ahead. If you plan on your date being a trip to the park, check ahead of time to locate the wheelchair accessible ramps or make sure that there is a handicapped bathroom facility. *During restrictions on outings, planning ahead may mean making sure a means of communication, such as a computer or tablet, will be available.*

- To aid your family member in remembering your special date, you can hang up a monthly calendar, marking in red these special dates and placing this calendar where your loved one can see it. *Care partners can assist with this if the family is in a residential community.*



- When choosing an outing to a restaurant, park, mall, etc., perhaps you should go at a less busy time of day. If it is a busy time of year, such as the holidays, a quiet date at home may be the perfect option.
- Do not be discouraged if the date doesn't go according to plan the first time. If you think about it, how often do dates really go as planned?

## ADAPTATIONS - More Challenging

- Involve your loved one in the planning. They can help in choosing places, times, and activities.
- Create special invitations to send out as reminders if others are involved in your date.
- If your date is at home for a meal, you can create simple menus for it. You could even dust off your loved one's favorite china and silver and use it to set the table. *Could you have special items delivered to a loved one's community to be delivered by staff or care partners?*
- Fill in a monthly calendar together marking special upcoming dates in red. You also could place stickers or stars to mark the special events.

## ADAPTATIONS - Less Challenging

- Begin with a simple, uncomplicated idea and increase the level of complexity over time. For instance, begin with that special tea or lemonade at the kitchen table or in their room once a week at 3:30. Over time, you may wish to plan an outing to the teahouse.
- Choose activities that do not require you to organize too much. Take your loved one to a movie. The entertainment is the movie, so you do not have to worry about providing it.

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