



## A CLIENT CARE MODULE: ACTIVITY & THE ELDERLY



...Developing top-notch caregivers, one inservice at a time.



*A Client Care Module:*

## ACTIVITY & THE ELDERLY

We hope you enjoy this inservice, prepared by registered nurses especially for caregivers like you!

## Instructions for the Learner

*If you are studying the inservice on your own, please do the following:*

- Read through **all** the material. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.
- If you have questions about anything you read, please ask your supervisor.
- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and pick the best answer.
- Check with your supervisor for the right answers. You need **8 correct** to pass!
- Print your name, write in the date, and then sign your name.
- Email In the Know at [feedback@knowingmore.com](mailto:feedback@knowingmore.com) with your comments and/or suggestions for improving this inservice.

**THANK YOU!**

### **After finishing this inservice, you will be able to:**

*List at least two benefits each of these activity types:*

*Physical activity  
Mental activity  
Social activity*



*Discuss why elderly people sometimes give up activities and what complications may develop from being inactive.*



*Describe how ADL's and IADL's are beneficial activities that can become part of your client's daily routine.*



*Suggest activities for every client, regardless of age or health status.*



*Help your elderly clients participate in activities every day.*



# in the know

CAREGIVER TRAINING

A Client Care Module:  
**Activity & the Elderly**

## Inside This Inservice:

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## ACTIVITY ADDS SPICE TO LIFE!

Think of all the activities that are part of your life—from the moment you get up until your head hits the pillow at night.

Your life is busy with things that you **have** to do, like getting dressed and eating dinner . . . and things that you **want** to do, like talking to friends and watching TV.

And, sometimes it seems like your days contain too many activities and too little time!

While you may wish for days with nothing on your schedule, imagine how empty your life would be without activity! **After all . . . it's all the ways that you spend time throughout your day that adds SPICE to your life!**

People of all ages want to live full lives. But, for some, staying active becomes too difficult. For example:

- A woman with arthritis may give up her favorite hobby of needlework because of arthritis pain.
- A man with cancer may become depressed and sleep all day.
- People who are confused may find it difficult to complete a game or puzzle . . . and just give up and do nothing.

Maintaining an active lifestyle helps elderly people enjoy a better quality of life. Most people are happy when life is a balance between:

- Resting,
- Meeting daily needs (eating, toileting, etc.),
- Socializing,
- Exercising, and
- Having fun!

**FACT:** The population of the United States is getting older!

***In 1950 there were just 17 million Americans over the age of 65. Today there are over 40 million!***

As people live longer, staying active and enjoying life is becoming more important than ever before.

***Keep reading to learn how you can help your clients stay physically, mentally and socially active . . . and how staying active can lead to a better quality of life!***



# THE BENEFITS OF ACTIVITY IN THE ELDERLY

TYPE OF ACTIVITY:	BENEFITS:
<p><b>Physical Activity</b> Examples: Walking, stretching, cleaning house.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces the risk of developing chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity.</li> <li>• Can help manage high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, or high cholesterol if they are already present.</li> <li>• Improves ability to function and stay independent.</li> <li>• Increases life expectancy. People who exercise live longer!</li> <li>• Improves mood and relieves symptoms of depression.</li> <li>• Improves strength, balance and coordination.</li> <li>• Lowers risk of falls and injury.</li> <li>• Improves quality of sleep.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mental Activity</b> Examples: Crossword puzzles, reading, writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases blood circulation in the brain.</li> <li>• Lowers the risk of developing dementia.</li> <li>• Improves memory.</li> <li>• Improves mental focus.</li> <li>• Improves self esteem.</li> <li>• Improves mood and relieves depression.</li> <li>• Enhances creativity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social Activity</b> Examples: Playing cards with a group, volunteering, attending church.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases life expectancy (even more than physical activity)!</li> <li>• Improves self worth.</li> <li>• Creates a sense of meaning and purpose in life.</li> </ul>



Activities can help pass the time and be a fun way for people to maintain or regain function. Here are some added benefits to staying active:

- **It can be entertaining.**
- **It provides a distraction.**
- **It promotes communication.**
- **It almost always has a therapeutic value.**
- **It stimulates thinking and creativity.**
- **It improves the quality of life.**

**Beneficial activities can be:**

- **Planned...***like a weekly outing to church.*
- **Spur-of-the-moment...***like singing along with a song on the radio.*
- **Daily...***like getting dressed.*
- **Occasional...***like going out to eat.*



## WHAT'S NEW?

Grab your favorite highlighter! As you read through this inservice, **highlight five things** you learn that you didn't know before. Share this new information with your supervisor and co-workers!



# COMPLICATIONS OF INACTIVITY

## WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT BEING INACTIVE?

Haven't old people earned the right to just sit and do nothing? Well, if people are **physically** inactive, they can have problems like:

- Pressure ulcers.
- Wasting away of their muscles.
- Constipation.
- Difficulty sleeping.
- Edema (swollen tissues).
- Blood clots.
- Urinary tract infections.
- Poor appetite.
- Pneumonia.

And, if people do nothing with their time, they can have **mental** and **emotional** problems like:

- Depression.
- Loneliness.
- Decreased self-esteem and confidence.
- Feelings of failure and helplessness.
- Increased stress.
- Dulling of the mind.

## WHY DO PEOPLE GIVE UP ACTIVITIES?

- As people age, they may slow down and have less energy.
- They may have less confidence due to changes like retirement, loss of spouse, loss of eyesight, hearing or mobility.
- They may be depressed due to loss or onset of disease.

Think about the types of activities we all perform in our lives, including:

- Things that **HAVE** to be done such as eating, sleeping and going to the bathroom.
- Things that **SHOULD** be done like brushing teeth, combing hair, bathing, dressing and housekeeping.
- Things that are **DESIRABLE** to do such as reading a book, playing a game, going to church, singing, watching TV and performing volunteer activities.

### Which of these types of activities do you think people give up first?

The things that are **desirable** are usually given up **first**.

- People stop working, lose interest in hobbies, lose touch with friends or find it too difficult to get around to visit family or friends.
- Giving up the fun activities in life can cause an elderly person to become isolated and depressed.

The **next** activities to be given up are the things that **should** be done.

- People who are depressed or too sick to care for themselves may stop brushing their hair and teeth or stop getting dressed.

The **last** activities to be given up are the things that **need** to be done.

- Most people continue to eat, go to the bathroom and sleep. These are the most basic activities of life.



# TALK about it!

## Open the Discussion

The best way to learn about what your client can or can't do for activities is to ASK!

After all, you don't want your client's recovery to get behind because you didn't know what they needed. And, you don't want to hurt anyone by doing an activity that is wrong or harmful, either.

Here are some things you can ask an activity director, a physical therapist, the doctor, the nurse or your supervisor:

- *My client is recovering from \_\_\_\_\_. What are the best types of activities for her?*
- *My client would like to get more physical exercise. What are the best stretching and strength building exercises I can help him do?*
- *My client is bedbound, and just watches TV all day. He seems bored. What other activities can I do with him?*
- *What should I do if my client refuses to do any activities?*

**Now, share what you learned with your co-workers. Find out if they have any useful tips you can use when doing activities with your client!**

# MAKING ROUTINE ACTIVITIES COUNT!

Activities of daily living (ADLs) are **ACTIVITIES!** Make every moment count! ADLs are those essential things everyone must do on a daily basis. Performing ADLs can be a great way for your client to get some physical, mental and social activity without even knowing it!

## WHAT ARE ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING (ADLs)?

About one fourth of elderly Americans need help with these personal care activities. A big part of your job is probably to assist your clients as they perform their ADLs.

The activities of daily living include seven personal care activities:

- Eating
- Toileting
- Dressing
- Bathing
- Walking
- Getting in and out of a bed or a chair
- Getting outside

## WHAT ARE INSTRUMENTAL ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING (IADLs)

You may also have heard about “instrumental activities of daily living”. IADLs are important activities—especially for people who live on their own. These “instrumental” activities include six home management activities:

- Preparing meals
- Managing money
- Doing light housework
- Using the telephone
- Doing heavy housework
- Shopping for personal items

## MAKE IT COUNT!

It may be easier and faster for you to do everything *for* your clients, but if you do, you are taking away important activities and helping to create dependence.

**For example:** *Mrs. Smith tries to do her own personal care. But, she is “slow as molasses”, especially when she brushes her hair and puts on her shoes. You hate to “waste time” waiting for her to finish, so you do it for her. After a few weeks, Mrs. Smith loses interest in caring for herself. She begins to feel helpless and shows signs of depression.*

Assist your clients when you are ordered to and when common sense tells you to. **For example:**

- Help your elderly clients in and out of the bathtub.
- Assist your clients if they use an electric or gas stove.
- Help confused clients when they use sharp scissors.

**THE BOTTOM LINE: Safety comes first . . . but don’t “do” for your clients just because you are in a hurry.**



# CONNECT it now!

## Apply what you know

Think about a client you care for right now and answer the following questions:

**Do you think your client is getting enough activity?** Yes No

**If you answered “Yes,” list a few of the activities your client does regularly.**

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**If you answered “No,” what do you think your client CAN do for activity?**

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**Is there anything you are doing for your client that he or she might be able to do independently?**

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# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

**Examples of physical activities your client may be able to do include:**

- Walking (indoor or out)
- Stretching
- Yoga or Tai Chi
- Chair exercises
- Dancing (can be done in a chair)
- Swimming
- Lifting light weights (like soup cans)
- Shopping
- Light Housework
- Light Gardening
- Fishing
- Active or passive range of motion exercises



## TIPS FOR INCORPORATING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INTO EACH CLIENT'S DAY

- Make sure you know how much physical activity is allowed for each of your clients.
- For bed or chair-bound clients, ask your supervisor if you're allowed to perform range-of-motion exercises.
- Encourage your clients to assist with their own personal care *as much as possible*. Lifting an arm to brush their own hair is a form of exercise. So is getting dressed and bending over to wash their own feet.
- Your clients may be more eager to walk if you make it fun. Promise to sing to them as they walk or use that time to tell a few jokes or to talk about the day's news headlines.
- Dancing can be a great exercise. If your clients enjoy music, encourage them to move to the beat—even if it's just tapping their toes. Some movement is better than none at all!
- Keep your clients' safety in mind at all times. Make sure they use any assistive equipment that has been ordered for them, such as a cane or walker.

**IMPORTANT:** *If you work with clients in their homes, be sure you know if their medical insurance requires them to be homebound. And if so, don't suggest activities that take place away from the client's home.*

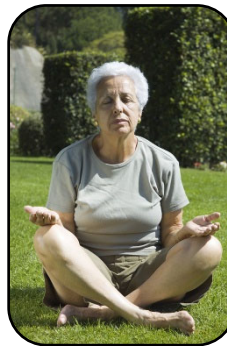


**TAI CHI** (pronounced TIE-chee) is a gentle, slow-motion form of ancient Chinese exercise.

It is a safe alternative for older adults who cannot otherwise exercise. It is very low impact, does not require any special equipment, and can be done indoors or out.

Individuals enrolled in Tai Chi exercise programs report:

- Stronger knee and ankle muscles,
- Improved mobility and flexibility,
- Better balance.



***Does your facility offer a Tai Chi class for residents? If so, observe a class one day to see if you think it might be right for your client.***

***If you work with clients in the home, look for a Tai Chi DVD at the library or search a local senior center or YMCA for classes.***

For more information about the benefits of Tai Chi, go to the National Institutes of Health website: <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/taichi>

# MENTAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

## Examples of mental activities your client may be able to do include:

- Computer work (internet, email, social networking, video games)
- Reading
- Writing
- Cooking (planning, shopping and preparing meals)
- Humor (creating humor, telling jokes or funny stories)
- Games (alone or in groups)
- Puzzles (crossword, sudoku, word search, and jigsaw puzzles)
- Crafts
- Playing a musical instrument (can benefit client physically, mentally and socially)
- Singing
- Meditation

## TIPS FOR INCORPORATING MENTAL ACTIVITY INTO YOUR CLIENT'S DAY

- If your client has a computer or access to a computer, encourage using it to look things up, keep in touch with family and friends through email, or locate family and friends on social networking sites like Facebook.
- Suggest your client's children or grandchildren introduce your client to video games. See research about gaming in the "Think About It" box to the right.
- If your client has a radio, ask if you can turn it to their favorite station.
- If you work in a facility, encourage your clients to attend musical gatherings such as concerts by school children or sing-alongs.
- Audio books (on cassette tapes) are available at public libraries for people whose eyesight or reading ability is poor.
- Consider reading the day's newspaper headlines or one interesting article from the newspaper to your client.
- Help your client to plan, prepare and serve a favorite meal.
- Provide access to solitary games like cards for playing solitaire or books with crossword puzzles.
- Talk to your clients about crafts and hobbies. Ask them what they would enjoy doing. But, be sure you check with your supervisor before providing clients with craft materials—especially scissors, glue and paint. Some clients need to be supervised when working with these items.



# THINK about it!

### Wii FOR THE ELDERLY!

Small studies are being conducted all over that are looking at how video games can benefit aging adults!

Exercise type games like Wii are showing clear benefits! The games require participants to become physically and mentally active and they promote social interaction.

One study in San Diego found that participants had a 50 percent or greater reduction in reports of depression.

Many had a significant improvement in memory and reported better quality of life.



A study in London is linking Wii Fit games to increased strength and coordination which can decrease a client's falls risk.

If you've never played Wii tennis, bowling or golf, or have never done Wii Fit exercises . . . find a friend with a Wii system now! Once you play you will see how these games can be beneficial to your elderly clients.

***If you work in a facility, you may already have access to a system. In the home, ask family members to include your client in the games!***



## SOCIAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

### Examples of social activities your client may be able to do include:

- Socializing (Keeping in touch with friends and family).
- Reminiscing (Telling stories about the “good ole times”).
- Intergenerational Activities (Activities with kids and grandkids).
- Caring for pets (Walking a dog in the park can be a social activity).
- Volunteering (Helping others).
- Group or team games (Cards, board games, shuffleboard).
- Sharing a meal (Picnics, barbeques, parties).
- Join a book club (Or start one if none exist).
- Get involved with a Church or community senior center.

### TIPS FOR INCORPORATING SOCIAL ACTIVITIES INTO YOUR CLIENT’S DAY

- If your clients don’t socialize with others—but they are capable of it—they may fight your suggestions to get together with people. But, don’t give up. Try to get them to talk about why they avoid being with other people.
- Are there members of a church group or other volunteer organization that would make visits to your clients—especially the ones who are rarely visited by family members?
- If family members (especially children) come to visit, encourage them to play a game with your client.
- Many elderly people seem to tell the same stories over and over again. To help your clients reminisce—and to stimulate thoughts about *different* memories—try asking them questions such as:
  - *What did groceries cost when you were a child?*
  - *What subjects did you like in school?*
  - *Did you grow up in the city or in the country?*
  - *What was your favorite holiday growing up?*
- Encourage your clients’ families to bring children for visits, but it’s usually best to limit the activity to an hour or two. The kids’ energy level may wear out elderly clients!
- Volunteering can give your client a sense of purpose, connectedness and the satisfaction of helping others in need. There are plenty of opportunities like packing care packages for troops overseas, organizing a coat drive for school kids, making blankets for sick children. Check out [www.seniorcorps.org](http://www.seniorcorps.org) for volunteer opportunities all over the United States.



### *Thinking outside the box!*

Working with clients in the home often requires coming up with creative solutions to uncommon problems.

- **THE PROBLEM:** You are caring for a 75 year old woman who, until recently, was active, social and independent.
- A few months ago, she had a mild stroke that weakened her physically and mentally. She has been resting and limiting strenuous activities.
- This week, she is feeling stronger. She wants to get dressed, go for a walk outside and visit her friends at the senior center.
- **WHAT YOU KNOW:** You know the exercise and social interaction is going to be good for her. But, you know she needs to pace herself.
- **GET CREATIVE:** Think of **3 creative solutions** you might suggest to your client to help her be as active as possible without overdoing it.
- **TALK ABOUT IT:** Share your ideas with your co-workers and supervisor and find out how they would solve the problem.

# A WORD ABOUT RELIGION

It is estimated that more than 90 percent of elderly people in the US consider themselves religious. For most, religion plays a major role in their life:

- 96 percent believe in God or a universal spirit.
- 90 percent pray.
- 50 percent attend religious services weekly or more often.

For many elderly people, the church is the largest source of social support aside from family and it is the most common source for social interaction.

It has been proven that seniors who are able to attend church and participate in fellowship have better physical and mental health. It's not clear whether it's the *religion* or the *fellowship* that is most helpful. It's probably a combination of both.

### Religion can give people:

- A more positive and hopeful attitude about life and illness.
- A sense of meaning and purpose.
- A greater ability to cope with illness and disability.



People who use religious coping mechanisms are less likely to develop depression and anxiety than those who do not. And, less depression and anxiety can decrease the risk of developing heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke.

***One study found that elderly people who attend religious services are more likely to stop smoking, exercise more, increase social contacts, stay married and live longer!***

Check with your supervisor to see if it's okay to discuss religion with your clients. If so, be sure not to push your own views on your clients. If they want to reminisce about spiritual issues, try asking questions such as:

- What is/was your church like?
- What is your favorite Bible verse?
- Do you have a favorite part of the church service?
- Do you pray?

Suggest religious or church-related activities to your clients if they seem open to it. Clients may benefit physically, mentally and socially from becoming involved.



# THE NEXT STEP!

*Apply what you've learned!*

### GO BEYOND THE OBVIOUS!

Look at the activity ideas listed on pages 5, 6 and 7. What's missing?

Get creative and think up a few more activities in each category that you might be able to try with your clients.

#### Physical Activities:

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#### Mental Activities:

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#### Social Activities:

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- ***Share your ideas with your co-workers and supervisor! Ask for their activity ideas!***
- ***Now start using all these fun activities in your daily routine with clients!***

# ACTIVITIES FOR CLIENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

## ACTIVITIES FOR CLIENTS WHO ARE BED OR CHAIR BOUND

- If you work with clients who are chair-bound—but who function well mentally—they can do most of the activities described in this inservice. Encourage them to stay as active as possible.
- If you work with clients who are bed-bound, they are probably very ill. They may enjoy calming activities like listening to soft music, having you read to them or just talking quietly.
- Some clients who have developed physical or mental impairments may choose to be inactive. It's important for you to know if your client is bed/chair-bound by *choice* or because of physical limitations. If you have questions about a particular client, discuss the issue with your supervisor.

## ACTIVITIES FOR CLIENTS WITH COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENTS

Clients with cognitive impairments tend to be confused and/or forgetful. This can make performing activities difficult.

These clients tend to live in the *present*—they can't remember activities that they did in the past, and they can't look forward to doing activities in the future. **Confused clients may have:**

- Short attention spans.
- An inability to perform complicated tasks.
- Mood swings.
- An inability to read or to understand what is read to them.
- No sense of time and place.
- No sense of reality.
- Less ability to move their bodies like they want to.

## SUGGESTIONS:

- Give simple directions, one step at a time for any activity.
- Ask "yes" or "no" questions. For example, instead of "What's your favorite kind of music?" try "Do you like piano music?"
- Pay attention to body language. For example, if your client seems to want to walk and pace then sweeping the floor would be a better activity choice than sitting down to sort socks.
- Dancing may be a great activity for a confused client who is eager to move. Just be sure they have safe footwear and plenty of room to move around.
- Try activities that stimulate thinking like looking through a magazine and talking about the pictures.
- Encourage your confused clients to perform other "useful" tasks such as emptying wastebaskets, dusting, or folding laundry.



## 5 KEY POINTS

### Key Points to Remember

1. People of all ages want to live full and active lives. Activities include all those things you do throughout your day that add SPICE to your life!
2. Some people may give up activities as they age because of declining health or emotional problems.
3. There are many benefits associated with physical, mental and social activities. Most clients will be able to participate in some sort of activity . . . even if it's just listening while you read a book out loud.
4. Activities of daily living (ADLs) are **ACTIVITIES!** Make every moment count! ADLs are those essential things everyone must do on a daily basis. Performing ADLs can be a great way for your client to get some physical, mental and social activity without even knowing it!
5. It's important to understand the needs, abilities and interests of each client. The more you understand about your clients, the more you can help them participate in a full and active life—no matter what their age or health status!





*A Client Care Module:*  
**Activity & the Elderly**

EMPLOYEE NAME  
*(Please print):*

\_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

- ***I understand the information presented in this inservice.***
- ***I have completed this inservice and answered at least eight of the test questions correctly.***

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:

\_\_\_\_\_

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Inservice Credit:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Self Study	1 hour
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Study	1 hour

***File completed test in employee's personnel file.***

***Are you "In the Know" about activity and the elderly? Circle the best choice or fill in your answer. Then check your answers with your supervisor!***

- 1. True or False**  
Doing crossword puzzles can decrease the risk of developing dementia.
- 2. True or False**  
Most elderly people are just not physically or mentally able to participate in activities.
- 3. True or False**  
ADLs are important, but should not be considered actual activities.
- 4. True or False**  
Reading, cooking and playing board games are all examples of mental activities.
- 5. When doing activities with clients who have dementia, you should:**
  - A. Give all the directions at the beginning of the activity.
  - B. Ask open ended questions like, "What would you like to do today?"
  - C. Give plenty of choices.
  - D. Encourage clients to perform "useful" tasks.
- 6. True or False**  
Pressure ulcers and depression can develop as a result of inactivity.
- 7. True or False**  
Volunteering is good for the community but has no real therapeutic benefit.
- 8. True or False**  
It's okay to suggest religious or church-related activities to your clients if they are open to it.
- 9. True or False**  
Activities with children should be limited to 1-2 hours at a time.
- 10. Fill in the Blanks**  
It may be easier for you to do everything for your clients, but doing this can create an unhealthy \_\_\_\_\_ on you.

