



# The Joy Kit

Activities to promote joy while caregiving.



**Acknowledgements  
and Copyrights**

The Joy Kit is a compilation of activities by Salt Lake County family caregivers, care receivers and care professionals. It was originally compiled for an Elder Care Conference involving a wide variety of professionals from Senior care professions throughout Salt Lake County, Utah. The exact names of those who originally contributed each activity was not collected. As all collections of care support materials, many of the activities are made up by family members working to achieve daily tasks in new and interesting ways. We therefore thank all of the family caregivers and care professionals who have contributed to the collected activities.

The Joy Kit may be copied and distributed as needed.

We appreciate the ever changing and developing skill of caregivers as they work to support the daily needs of our frail and aging care receivers.

Best wishes on a successful and JOYFUL caregiving experience.



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## "Bean and Rice Bags"

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**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Anywhere with a comfortable chair.

**How to Set Up:** Sew material squares leaving a hole big enough to put a funnel and / or a spoon through. This activity can be done in the person's lap or at a table. Ask the person where they would like to do the activity.

**Materials Needed:**

- Fabric sewn into squares or other interesting shapes
- Beans or rice
- A spoon
- A funnel
- A needle and thread

**Where to obtain Materials:** Old wash clothes  
Fabric from old jeans or clothes  
Kitchen  
Grocery store  
Fabric store

**Activity:**

1. Select a material bag.
2. Carefully pour uncooked beans or rice into the bag.
3. Fill each bag 3/4 full.
4. After all the bags are full of beans or rice, take a needle and some thread and sew the small opening together.
5. Play a short game with the new bags: table bowling, tossing games.

**Modifications:** These bags can be filled with a variety of ingredients such as sand in baggies inside the material, dry grains, seeds. They can be used as texture bags to keep hands busy, or simple relaxation bags, either cold from the freezer or warm from the microwave.

**Questions for Discussion:** Did you play bean bags when you were little?  
What shall we do with our bags when we are done?  
What is your favorite textured bean bag?

## "Bird Watching"

---

**Preparation Time:** 10 minutes

**Location:** Anywhere the outdoors can be seen.

**How to Set Up:** Indoors—open the curtains, find a comfortable seat with a clear view of the yard, trees and sky.

Outdoors—backyard away from the noise of the street, a park, or wooded area where birds are more likely to be located.

**Materials Needed:**

- Binoculars
- Chair or bench
- Bird feeder
- A cool drink
- A book to record findings
- Pictures of birds
- Bird identification book
- Sunscreen

**Where to obtain Materials:** Grocery store  
Household items  
Book from the Library  
Bird and nature magazines  
Internet

**Activity:**

1. Apply and smell the sunscreen.
2. Sit outdoors or in the window observing nature.
3. Identify the types of birds that are seen.
4. Write down in a bird journal what birds were seen each time the activity is done. Compare the birds that return each time with the birds that are new or "visiting." Speculate about where the birds travel and the activities they do.

**Modifications:** If doing the activity indoors, the outdoor feeling can be simulated with a CD of bird and nature sounds (forests, birds).

**Questions for Discussion:** Do you see the \_\_\_\_\_ on the birds wings?  
Which bird is the largest? Most colorful?  
What kinds of songs do they sing?  
Can you whistle like a bird?

## "Bubble Festival"

---

**Preparation Time:** 15 minutes

**Location:** Backyard, park or unfinished basement.

**How to Set Up:** Purchase or mix up your own bubble soap; blow bubbles and try to catch them on a wool scarf, spoon or stick.

**Materials Needed:**

- Bubble solution
- Bubble wands
- Scarf
- A sense of humor
- A smile
- Friends & Family

**Where to obtain Materials:** Grocery store or around the kitchen  
Around the kitchen

**Activity:**

1. Put the wand in the bubble solution.
2. Move the wand through the air.
3. Blow or create bubble.
4. Try to catch the bubbles on a scarf or pillow case.
5. Try blowing the bubbles along through the air.
6. Try to catch a bubble on a spoon or your hand.
7. Laugh and tease each other.

**Modifications:** This activity can be done from a chair, wheel chair, park bench, balcony. It's fun to blow bubbles around animals and children too. Experience joy!

**Bubble Formulas:** Regular Bubbles:

- 1 part regular Dawn / Joy dishwashing detergent
- 15 parts distilled water
- .25 parts glycerin or white Karo syrup

Super Bubbles:

- 2 parts regular Dawn or Joy dish washing detergent
- 4 parts glycerin
- 1 part white Karo syrup

## "Busy Hands"

---

**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Any where with room to sit and fold.

**How to Set Up:** Place articles of clothes in a basket or box.

**Materials Needed:**

- Basket
- Articles of clothing
- Wash clothes
- Towels
- Pairs of socks
- Tee shirts
- A place to set the folded item in or on

**Where to obtain Materials:** Home  
Thrift stores  
Old clothes and towels from friends or family  
Laundry room

**Activity:**

1. Place articles in a pile.
2. Ask them to sort the articles into "like" piles.
3. Fold the articles.
4. Put them back in the basket folded.
5. Put away if possible.
6. If the folding articles are extra, leave them the basket until the next time the game is played.

**Modifications:** This is an activity to keep the use of hand and eye coordination active. Any item that can be folded or sorted could be substituted to add variety to the activity.

**Questions for Discussion:** Tell me about the smell of clean laundry?  
Do you wash with hot or cold water?  
Do you ever lose a sock?  
Has the dog/cat ever gotten into the clean clothes?  
Where do you put dirty clothes?  
Where do you keep clean clothes?  
How do you find your own clothes?  
Have you ever had colors "run?"

## “Clipping Coupons”

---

**Preparation Time:** 10 minutes

**Location:** Kitchen table

**How to Set Up:** Put the needed materials below in piles on the table. Make sure the scissors and waste basket are clearly visible and reachable. Note: accuracy or good cutting is not the focus here. The person does a useful and time-consuming activity that can be helpful. It also appeals to a sense of color and artistic movement.

**Materials Needed:**

- Newspapers ads
- Advertisements
- Blunt scissors
- Small purse / wallet
- Envelopes with labels (food, drinks, cleaning supplies.)
- Waste basket
- Loose coins

**Where to obtain Materials:** Mailbox  
Grocery Store  
Neighbors

**Activity:**

1. Offer coupon ads.
2. Assist to cut out coupons if needed.
3. Sort food, cleaning products, other, into properly labeled envelopes.
4. Sort pile of small change.
5. Count and sort and place in purse.
6. Put coupons and purse together for next trip to the store.

**Modifications:** This activity can be modified to include family photo sorting, clothes ideas from magazines, etc. It is done to give the person a thought process activity—clipping, sorting and possibly for use with the caregiver on a shopping excursion.

**Questions for Discussion:** Did you use coupons?  
How much money did you save?  
Did you keep the money separate for special things?  
What did you need at the store?  
What are you hungry for?  
Find the best bargain.  
Is this a new product?

## "Cream Cheese Mints"

**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes to 1 hour

**Location:** Kitchen table

**How to Set Up:** Collect equipment and ingredients. Mix thoroughly, tint and shape batter into individual bite-size candies. Let dry and then put into airtight containers.

**Materials Needed:**

- 1-8oz. package cream cheese (softened)
- 2 lbs confectioner's sugar
- 2 tsp peppermint extract
- 1/2 teaspoon red or green food coloring
- Sifter, large bowl, wooden spoon, waxed paper

**Where to get materials:** Kitchen  
Grocery Store

**Activity:**

1. Sift confectioner's sugar.
2. Cream together cheese and sifted confectioner's sugar. Stir until smooth.
3. Add flavoring and stir until mixed.
4. Pinch off small pieces of mix and shape into balls.
5. Place the balls on the waxed paper to dry.
6. Air dry for 2-3 hours. Store in airtight container or freezer until ready to serve.

**Modifications:** The flavor can be exchanged to suit the taste of those participating: butter and lemon flavors are popular with cream cheese. Make for special occasions. Other cooking ideas? Try Rice Krispie Treats, "no bake" cookies or pudding cups.

**Questions for Discussion:** What was served at your wedding reception?  
Did you have a special treat for Holidays?  
What is your favorite flavor?

## "Current Events Discussion"

---

**Preparation Time:** No preparation time

**Location:** Anywhere

**How to Set Up:** This discussion can be held in the car on the way to other events or just at home around the dinner table. A current newspaper, news report or magazine can also be used as a catalyst.

**Materials Needed:**

- A quiet place
- Time to talk
- Time to focus on each other

**Where to obtain Materials:** Television  
Mail box  
Grocery store magazine rack

**Activity:**

1. Talk about what you saw on the news.
2. Discuss what the radio announcer just said.
3. Talk about an article you saw in the paper last night.
4. Talk about current political views.
5. Ask each other opinion on controversial issues of the day.

**Modifications:** This is a thought provoking conversation activity. Any subject can be exchanged for current events. Subjects like ancient history, the 1950's, the big band era, WWII, Royalty, current music trends, theatre and the arts are very popular.

**Questions for Discussion:** Have you ever met a high level politician? Famous person?  
What was your impression?  
Would you ever want to hold office? Make policy?  
What is your opinion based on? Experience? Fact? Feeling?  
What would you change if you had influence?  
What did you dream of becoming when you were a child?

## "Dining Out"

---

**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** A quiet restaurant

**How to Set Up:** Print off menus and maps for restaurants from the internet. Over time, bring home take out menus or "to go" menus from restaurants.

**Materials Needed:**

- Menu
- Map
- Transportation
- Paper
- Pen
- A change of clothes

**Where to obtain Materials:** Restaurants  
Around the house  
Closet  
Friends and Family

**Activity:**

1. Write down the foods that interest you.
2. Compare your list of favorite foods to the menus at hand.
3. Decide which restaurant offers the food you're interested in.
4. Plan out your menu and route.
5. Plan to go when the care receiver is most alert.
6. Avoid crowds and noise, foods that are difficult to cut up, chew, etc.

**Modifications:** This activity can be done as a breakfast, lunch, dinner or tea and cookies type of outing. Offer the option in different ways to meet the current energy level and strength of the care receiver. You can also use this method to pick up take out.

**Questions for Discussion:** What is your favorite place to eat?  
What do you think about the decorations here? Atmosphere?  
What is your favorite restaurant story? Experience?

## "Feeding the Birds"

---

**Preparation Time:** 1 hour

**Location:** Backyard, park or from a comfortable chair on the balcony.

**How to Set Up:** Time to buy bird feeder and holder or to buy seed. Install a bird feeder for daily use or buy a bag of seed that the participant can help spread below a balcony, buy a window or near a bench at the park.

**Materials Needed:**

- Bird Feeder
- Bird Seed
- Bird identification book
- A hummingbird liquid feeder
- A nice cold drink
- A camera

**Where to obtain Materials:** Stores like Home Depot, Lowes, Walmart or pet stores  
Check a book out of the library  
Book store

**Activity:**

1. Install the bird feeder so it can be easily seen.
2. Observe what birds come to the feeder or to the seed.
3. Identify the birds using the birds book.
4. Try different kinds of seed in different places to attract different kinds of birds.
5. Record how many birds you are able to attract.

**Modifications:** This activity can be done from a chair, wheel chair, park bench, balcony environment or any outdoor viewing or accessible location.

**Questions for Discussion:** Discuss bird characteristics, sounds and colors.  
Try to identify birds that continually return.  
Does the bird with just one leg come back often?  
Does the sparrow hawk scare the birds away?  
Have the birds made your feeder a reliable food source?  
Do the birds get nervous when you move or walk by?

## “Finger Food in the Park”

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**Preparation Time:** 15 minutes

**Location:** Picnic Table in back yard or local park / garden.

**How to Set Up:** Cover a table with plastic or a paper towel to keep surface clean.

**Materials Needed:**

- Bread
- Knife
- Peanut butter & Jelly
- Napkins
- Glasses
- Drinks
- Carrot sticks
- Small bag of chips

**Where to obtain Materials:** Kitchen  
Grocery store

**Activity:**

1. Open bread — toast it or have it plain.
2. Put the bread out onto the napkin or plate.
3. Spread the peanut butter and jelly onto the bread.
4. Assemble the sandwich.
5. Cut in four smaller pieces (squares or triangles).
6. Take extra time to enjoy eating outside.
7. Talk about your favorite lunch time memories.

**Modifications:** This is an activity to build simple food with your hands. Use safer knives. Food substitutions can be made such as chicken salad, meat and cheese, or banana and peanut butter. The object is to eat slow, enjoy fresh air and share memories.

**Questions for Discussion:** Did you carry sack lunches to school?  
What was your favorite? Least liked?  
Did you ever swap sandwiches or goodies with friends?  
How much would we charge someone for this sandwich?  
Did you ever dream of opening a sandwich shop?

## “Finish the... Story, Phrase or Song”

---

**Preparation Time:** Initial game creation time can take a few hours.

**Location:** Anywhere with a flat surface—kitchen table, park or picnic table.

**How to Set Up:** Initial game creation: On one side of each index card have the first half of a famous or well known saying. On the back side of each index card put the second half of each saying, such as “A stitch in time” and “saves nine”. Set around a table with drinks and snacks—make it a social event.

**Materials Needed:**

- Index cards
- Colored markers
- A list of sayings
- Old books with rhymes
- A drink and snacks
- Time to relax

**Where to obtain Materials:** Saying can be found on the internet or by thinking about old movie or commercial jingles. Other options... old song books, nursery rhyme books, or gather sayings from care receivers during previous activities.

**Activity:**

1. Gather around a flat surface.
2. Place the cards face up on the table—the first half of the saying should be face up.
3. Point to a card and guess the 2nd half of the saying.
4. Turn the card over and see if you got the saying right.
5. Share a laugh and humor with each mistake.
6. Share memories about each jingle or saying.

**Modifications:** To turn this into a matching game, write the two halves on two different cards. Mix the cards on the table face up and sort the cards into matched pairs. “A Rolling Stone...” would be matched with “...gathers no moss,” etc.

**Questions for Discussion:** How old were you when this jingle came out?  
Did your mom ever read you nursery rhymes?  
What was your favorite jingle? Why?  
What was your favorite bedtime story? Nursery rhyme?

## "Gardening with Grandparents"

---

**Preparation Time:** None

**Location:** Any garden location.

**How to Set Up:** This activity is good for when the care receiver is a gardener or has been a gardener. Select a time of day when it is comfortable outside and you have extra time set aside.

**Materials Needed:**

- Transportation
- Garden

**Where to obtain Materials:** Back yard  
Local park  
Public garden

**Activity:**

1. Have the person walk around the yard
2. Share the names of the plants, trees, flowers
3. Try to repeat and memorize what they tell you
4. Talk about planting seasons
5. Ask questions about when, where and how to plant

**Modifications:** If the person cannot walk around the yard, get a gardening book from the library and ask the same questions, using pictures of plants.

**Questions for Discussion:** Why do you like gardening?  
How did you learn to garden?  
How many different gardens have you had?  
What grows well in this area? The shade? Full sunlight?  
What is your favorite task in gardening?  
What is your favorite plant? Flower? Tree? Why?  
Do you have a "green thumb"?

## "Gift Wrapping"

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**Preparation Time:** 15 minutes

**Location:** A clear table area or flat surface.

**How to Set Up:** Spread the materials for the activity out around the participant.

**Materials Needed:**

- Wrapping paper
- Comic strip paper
- Color ribbons, bows
- Small flowers
- Glue stick
- Tape
- Small empty boxes
- Rewrap able items

**Where to obtain Materials:** Novelty or dollar store  
Toy section of department stores  
Craft store  
Newspaper / funny section

**Activity:**

1. "Help me wrap this present."
2. Select, smooth paper.
3. Wrap and ribbon.
4. Tape.
5. Admire.
6. Continue.

**Modifications:** This activity is done to keep a "hands on" individual active, allowing them to use their creativity, energy and hands. Other good craft ideas include: building with wood and log pieces, building a Lego or block village, etc.

**Questions for Discussion:** What is the best gift you ever got?  
Does the wrapping improve the gift?  
Have you ever seen packages wrapped with \_\_\_\_\_?  
Do you save wrapping paper, ribbon? Where and how?  
What is your favorite color?

## "Instant Pudding"

---

**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Kitchen

**How to Set Up:** Cover a table with plastic, put beach towel on bench or seat. Provide an apron or bib as needed for participants medical and physical conditions.

**Materials Needed:**

- Instant pudding mix
- Milk
- Bowl
- Whisk
- Measuring cup
- Small bowls to divide pudding into individual servings
- Topping choices

**Where to obtain Materials:** Kitchen  
Grocery Store

**Activity:**

1. Get out implements.
2. Open pudding mix.
3. Pour into bowl.
4. Measure milk.
5. Pour into pudding.
6. Whisk until smooth and thick.
7. Set in refrigerator.
8. Bring out, add toppings and eat.

**Modifications:** Obtain large handle instruments if patient has arthritic hands. These can be found in many kitchen and medical supply stores.

**Questions for Discussion:** Did your parents ever make pudding?  
What is your favorite dessert memory?  
Bring out happy memories or any reminiscences.

## "Kitchen Table Picnic"

---

**Preparation Time:** Varies

**Location:** Kitchen Table

**How to Set Up:** Pre-arrange a time and place with family and friends to help you throw a "Kitchen Table Picnic." Bring fun, finger foods—easy to reach and eat. Avoid food that requires cutting.

**Materials Needed:**

- Small sandwiches
- Carrot sticks
- Pigs in a blanket
- Spoon-able salads
- Picnic plates, cups, utensils
- Picnic table cloth
- Finger Foods / Desserts

**Where to obtain Materials:** Kitchen  
Grocery Store  
Friends and Family bring side dishes

**Activity:**

1. Set the kitchen table as if outside at a picnic.
2. Open the windows to hear the outside noises.
3. Use paper plates, cups and other outdoor utensils.
4. Dress casual.
5. Simulate bird sounds with a relaxing outdoor music CD.

**Modifications:** This is a simulation activity to add variety to a home bound care receiver's routine. A caregiver can also simulate a restaurant, a favorite childhood experience, etc. A dinner theatre can also be simulated using old movie clips, family movies, etc.

**Questions for Discussion:** Do you remember when...?  
What were your favorite childhood finger foods?  
What were the foods you absolutely hated? Why?

## "Life's Review"

---

**Preparation Time:** Drive time or walking distance.

**Location:** Anywhere

**How to Set Up:** Relax in a comfortable chair with a newspaper., or go for a walk in the local cemetery. Cemeteries have well groomed paths and lawns and invite the discussion of sensitive topics.

**Materials Needed:**

- Newspaper
- Grave stones
- Cemetery
- Good weather
- A light breeze
- Time to talk

**Where to obtain Materials:** Local community Cemetery Store

**Activity:**

1. When you come to an obituary or grave stone of someone you know, stop and mention one great thing about that person.
2. Ask each other what you hope people will say about you when they pass your grave stone or read your obituary many years from now.
3. Simply walk and talk in complete trust and peace.

**Modifications:** The object is to discuss the connections we have to other human beings and the impact they have made on our life. It can also be modified to review the achievements we have each made and to talk about the important issues of our lives.

**Questions for Discussion:** What is a funny adventure you had with that person?  
Did they impact your life in any way?  
What might they say about us when we're gone?  
What do you hope they will say?  
What do you want to learn, accomplish or experience between now and then?

## “Meals on the Move”

---

**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Anywhere you can go with an appetite.

**How to Set Up:** Find a good location: a good rest stop in a national park, a parking lot with a good view of a local site or park. If the person can walk to a picnic table, pack a blanket or table cloth and go to a park. Pack options for shade if needed. If they need to stay in the car, park in a shady spot with the windows down.

**Materials Needed:**

- Take out food
- Table cloth
- Drinks with lids
- A smile
- Time to relax
- A sense of humor

**Where to obtain Materials:** Any local fast food restaurant. Healthy take out is becoming much more common. Also, a simple sack lunch from home can also be substituted. Dollar menus also make outings a little more affordable.

**Activity:**

1. Decide what food you want to eat.
2. Pack a lunch bag or go through a drive through location.
3. Drive to a good parking place with a view.

**Modifications:** Do Wednesday at Wendy’s, French Fry Fridays, Taco Tuesdays, Site Seeing Sundays—make up fun days to match restaurants. Celebrate “this day in History” or the birthday of an old friend who has passed. Have a birthday for Elvis.

**Questions for Discussion:** Where should we go today?  
What is your favorite local park?  
Have you ever been to the Jordan River?  
Count car colors on the drive? How many blue? Model?  
What type of car did you always want? Now? Then?  
Did you go on picnics with parents? Grandparents?

## “Our Little Feathered Friends”

---

**Preparation Time:** 10 minutes

**Location:** Anywhere with a flat surface—kitchen table, lap tray, TV tray.

**How to Set Up:** Find a good location. Get comfortable. Demonstrate stringing cereal on a shoestring or piece of yarn.

**Materials Needed:**

- Shoe string
- Heavy yarn
- Large blunt tapestry needle
- Cheerios or other unsweetened cereal

**Where to obtain Materials:** Any local grocery store  
Craft or material store (needle)

**Activity:**

1. String cereal onto the shoelace or strand of yarn.
2. Tie the ends to make a “food string”.
3. Hang the food string in the tree by the window.
4. Watch the birds eat the food string.
5. This is especially good for winter when birds are looking for food.

**Modifications:** Smear globs of peanut butter on pine cones and press birdseed into the peanut butter. Hang the cones in the tree. Or... rent a bird video from the library. Some people like to watch the birds without waiting for a bird to show in their own window.

**Questions for Discussion:** What is your favorite kind of bird?  
How long have you loved watching birds?  
What birds come to eat in your trees?  
Draw pictures of birds or look them up in a bird dictionary.

## “Perfect Cup Cakes”

---

**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Kitchen table

**How to Set Up:** Cook cup cakes in advance so that they are cool. Take the cupcakes out of their paper or tin. The activity is around the decoration and eating. Cover the table with plastic or a light cloth that can be washed.

**Materials Needed:**

- Cupcakes
- Frosting
- Toppings
- Decorative items
- Blunt pastry knives or butter knives
- Napkins, small plates and a fork

**Where to obtain Materials:** Kitchen, bakery stores or isles at the grocery store  
Around the house

**Activity:**

1. Place the cupcake upside down on a small plate.
2. Have each person frost their cupcake like a mini-cake.
3. Decorate by season (fall, spring, etc.)
4. Decorate by holiday (Christmas, Easter, etc.)
5. Decorate by artist or subject (Picasso or historical event)
6. Have the toppings in small open bowls for easy access.
7. Eat the mini-cakes with a cold glass of milk.

**Modifications:** If you don't want to use cakes or cookies for this adventure, you can use bowls of different colored sand and have them create sand paintings on a flat piece of white paper. Glue can be spread on the paper if you want to keep the sand drawing.

**Questions for Discussion:** Did you have birthday cakes or cupcakes as a child?  
Do you remember what your last birthday cake looked like?  
Do you prefer pie or cake?  
What is your favorite dessert?

## “Photo Shoot Make Over”

---

**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Bedroom and Bathroom

**How to Set Up:** Explain to the participant that you want to do a make over and a photo shoot to give the family a new picture. Have the participant help choose an outfit from the closet to be put on after the hair, shaving or make up have been completed.

**Materials Needed:**

- Shampoo
- Hair styling equipment
- Perfume / after shave
- Finger nail file / polish
- Comfortable chair for participant
- A change of clothes
- Camera, chosen backdrop

**Where to obtain Materials:** Bathroom  
Bedroom  
Place to take a picture (by fireplace, in garden, etc.)  
Store

**Activity:**

2. Ask them to help you play the “Photo Shoot Make Over” for a new photo the grandchildren want.
3. Decide what personal hygiene task to pursue: hair, nails, clean clothes.
4. Tell the individual that you need to get them ready for a family photo—a secret photo you are going to take to give their grandchildren at Christmas or some other upcoming holiday.

**Modifications:** This activity is used to promote good hygiene. It may not be possible to get the person to allow all hygiene tasks at the same time, adapt as needed. Allow the person to help apply make up and other small tasks as their abilities allow.

**Questions for Discussion:** What did your hair look like when you were married?  
What did you wear your hair like when you went \_\_\_\_\_.  
Have you ever had a professional manicure?  
Have you ever been to a professional photographer?  
What is the difference between evening and day make up?  
Where did you get the scar on your hand?  
When was the first time you ever dressed up?

## “Planning a Dream Trip”

---

**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** At a Table

**How to Set Up:** Clean off the table so the only things on it are related to the activity. Place the items below on the table. Prepare finger foods on a plate at the table. Activities can require extra energy!

**Materials Needed:**

- Road Map
- Travel Planner
- Travel magazines
- Notebook
- Pen
- Blank itinerary

**Where to obtain Materials:** Around the house  
Grocery store  
Friends and Neighbors  
Ads in the mailbox

**Activity:**

2. Look at the travel magazines.
3. Brainstorm vacation options.
4. Decide where you want to go and why.
5. Study the map, guidebook.
6. List the route of cities to visit while there.
7. Make lists of what to pack.
8. Make a list of things you see.

**Modifications:** This is a planning and decision making activity. Individuals can plan other local activities in the same way. Give them a stack of local parks, restaurants, etc. and plan a day out.

**Questions for Discussion:** Where was your favorite vacation site? Still want to see?  
Where was your worst vacation? Best vacation?  
Did you ever get lost? Have an unexpected adventure?  
What is your favorite hotel? why?  
Did you ever play road games, count license plates, etc.?

## “Plate Paintings”

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**Preparation Time:** 10 minutes

**Location:** Anywhere with a flat surface—kitchen table, park or picnic table.

**How to Set Up:** Prepare water based paint or children’s paints. Have water, paint and white paper plates available for painting. Pretend the rim of the plate is a frame and that the inside of the plate is the canvas.

**Materials Needed:**

- Paper plates
- Paint
- Wet clothes for washing fingers
- A cup of water for brushes
- Brushes
- Pictures from magazines

**Where to obtain Materials:** Any local craft or super grocery store  
Around the house

**Activity:**

1. Put the paints and other supplies in front of the participant.
2. Explain that the plate rim is the frame.
3. Ask each person to paint a picture using ideas and thoughts from magazines, nature or things in the room.
4. Choose various options—theme painting for seasons, times, artistic styles, etc.
5. Display the paintings in the kitchen or person’s bedroom.

**Modifications:** A piece of paper can also be taped down to the plastic covered table to form a nice border. When painting is complete, the tape is removed from the paper and gives the picture a nice square or shaped border—works well for individuals with arthritis.

**Questions for Discussion:** Did you ever take art classes?  
Do you like to paint?  
Is this a new activity for you?  
What do you like to paint most?

## "Quilting Squares"

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**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Any comfortable chair and a table.

**How to Set Up:** Gather the necessary items listed below and put two comfortable chairs up to a table. This can also be done outside with two sturdy but comfortable chairs and a card or picnic table.

**Materials Needed:**

- Old clothes
- Old towels
- Any old fabric
- A pattern
- Safe scissors
- A ruler
- A black marker

**Where to obtain Materials:** You closet  
Salvation Army or Deseret Industries  
Savers or Walmart \$1.00 fabric racks  
Fabric store

**Activity:**

1. Gather around the table.
2. Ask the person to join you.
3. Explain how you need help cutting / marking quilt squares.
4. Show the person how to measure and cut each square.
5. Have them either trace or cut the squares.
6. Celebrate the work being done.
7. Share memories while working.

**Modifications:** For those with cognitive impairment, have a pre-created set of shapes for them to cut around. If the participant has arthritis, use scissors with the grippers on them or create your own "grip" scissors by putting cotton on the scissors with tape.

**Questions for Discussion:** I never like this dress anyway, shall we cut it up?  
What material would you like to use?  
What color do you want to cut next?  
Feel this fabric, isn't it nice and soft?

## “Reminis-Scents”

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**Preparation Time:** 15 - 30 minutes

**Location:** Kitchen, bedroom, home—kids can play too.

**How to Set Up:** Collect items from around the house that have a strong scent or smell. Put all of the items collected in a large box with a lid.

**Materials Needed:**

- Oranges / peanut butter
- Onion / chewing gum
- Flower / candle
- Deodorant / shampoo
- Rubbing alcohol
- Hand lotion / after shave
- Vanilla / tea bags
- Items that smell!

**Where to obtain Materials:** Around the house

**Activity:**

1. Blindfold the player and hold up an item for them to smell and identify.
2. Once they have identified the smell, have them tell you a memory that goes with the smell. Example: one man told how he remembered his mom baking when he smelled vanilla.
3. Rotate through all the participants, each getting a different smell—until all items have been used.

**Modifications:** Blindfold is optional. Instead of guessing, the person can simply be handed an object to smell and talk about the memories it invokes. You can also blind fold a whole family group and have all of them guess the smell and tell memories.

**Questions for Discussion:** What do you think this item is?  
What does the smell remind you of?  
What is your favorite memory about oranges?  
What does the smell make your mouth do? Water? Pucker?

## “Sand Castles at the Beach”

---

**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Kitchen / Picnic Table (Outside)

**How to Set Up:** Cover a table with plastic, put beach towel on bench or seat. Put sand in a pile in front of the participant. Put all other materials near the participant one at a time as needed.

**Materials Needed:**

- Plastic to cover table
- Beach towel
- Sunscreen
- Sand in a bucket
- A glass of water
- Seashells
- Pictures of “sea scenes”
- Children’s sandbox tools

**Where to obtain Materials:** Novelty or dollar store  
Toy section of department stores  
Craft store (sand)  
Old Magazines

**Activity:**

1. Apply and smell the sunscreen.
2. Open and spread the towel onto the seat.
3. Play in the sand, get it wet and build a castle, designs.
4. Sort the sea shells.
5. Look at pictures and dream, pretend, reminisce.

**Modifications:** If doing the activity indoors, the outdoor feeling can be simulated with a CD of beach sounds. Before starting the activity, one can also review any vacation albums and photos of family activities at the beach.

**Questions for Discussion:** Have you ever been to the beach?  
What did you like to do at the beach?  
Do you like sea shells? Smooth ones? Rough ones?  
Do you like the feeling of sand between your fingers?

## “Sharing Holiday Memories”

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**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Any location

**How to Set Up:** One may choose to tape, video or record of the person while stories are being told. Choose a comfortable, warm space where the participant feels safe, will relax and open up.

**Materials Needed:**

- Video camera
- Recording device
- Paper to take notes
- Items to stimulate discussion
- Pictures

**Where to obtain Materials:** Around the house

**Activity:**

1. Select a holiday or record a story each holiday of the year.
2. Ask the person to share their memories.
3. Make sure you occasionally ask how old they were when each instance occurred, where they lived and even names and ages of participants.
4. Act the part of an interviewer.

**Modifications:** This is a reminiscence activity. Any memory pattern can be substituted for the holiday—such as: places lived, school experiences (elementary through university), church experiences, travel experiences, etc. Record the participant’s history.

**Questions for Discussion:** Use probing, deep questions to flush out stories:  
How did that make you feel?  
Who else was with you? What did they look like?  
What did you and your friends like to wear?  
What did you eat at holiday meals? Favorites? Things hated?  
What kind of personality did your dad have?  
Did you mom have any mannerisms or quirks you remember?

## "Sipping Cider"

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**Preparation Time:** 15 minutes

**Location:** Kitchen

**How to Set Up:** Place a cloth or dish towel on the participation space to keep it clean.

**Materials Needed:**

- Packet of Cider or Cocoa
- Hot water
- Cup
- Marshmallows for Cocoa
- Spoon
- Napkin
- Small snacks or treats
- A clean, quiet space

**Where to obtain Materials:** Kitchen  
Grocery store

**Activity:**

1. Set up space and get out packets.
2. Heat water on the stove or in the microwave.
3. Pout content of packet into the cup.
4. Pour in the water.
5. Stir until dissolved.
6. Test for temperature.
7. Drink.
8. Have a good conversation.

**Modifications:** This activity is simply a feel good moment with a good conversation. Simply sit still, have a comfort drink and enjoy building relationships. Substitutions can be made with any drink: hot cocoa, tea, coffee, a fancy soda, blender drink, etc.

**Questions for Discussion:** Do you remember having cider as a child?  
What hot drinks did you have?  
What is your favorite fancy drink? Why?  
When do you like to have hot drinks? Morning? Winter? When?  
What fun items can be used to make a drink look pretty?  
Pineapple wedge? Cherries? Marshmallows? Mint leaves?

## "Sorting Games"

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**Preparation Time:** 10 minutes

**Location:** Kitchen / Picnic Table (Outside)

**How to Set Up:** Set out a white table cloth so things can be easily seen. Place items to be sorted in a pile in front of the participants.

**Materials Needed:** (choose one of the following)

- Box of old buttons
- Tin of bolts or screws
- Basket of clean laundry
- Stack of magazine (various types requiring sorting into groups, etc.)

**Where to obtain Materials:** Garage  
Sewing Room  
Laundry Room  
Friends and Neighbors (old magazine, pictures, etc.)

**Activity:**

1. Place the items to be sorted in a pile in front of the individual.
2. Sort them by size, color, shape, etc.
3. Give new rules or guidelines to change the activity.

**Modifications:** This activity can be modified to include family photo sorting, clothes ideas from magazines, etc.

**Questions for Discussion:** Do you remember what was made out of this fabric?  
Do you remember Sally's blue dress?  
How many clear buttons can you find?  
How many yarns are similar colors?  
Do you remember these Valentines, Birthday , Christmas cards?  
Can you sing Happy Birthday or Up on the Housetop?

## "Sorting Seeds"

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**Preparation Time:** 10 minutes

**Location:** Anywhere with a flat surface for sorting.

**How to Set Up:** Put all materials on the table near the participant as needed. Give them a stack of seed packets and a place to sort them into.

**Materials Needed:**

- Packets of flower seeds
- Packets of vegetable seeds
- Labeled boxes
- A glass of juice
- Snacks or finger foods
- Calm music
- Drawing of garden space

**Where to obtain Materials:** Home Depot, Lowes or other garden stores  
Super grocery store  
Around the house

**Activity:**

1. Sort packets of seeds by type into labeled boxes.
2. Put the vegetable seeds in the "vegetable box" and the flower seeds in the "flower box". Name all the seeds.
3. Draw a picture of a garden space, plan which flowers you would plant in each space available, and where you would put the flowers. You can also put the packets out around the paper to show what would be planted where.

**Modifications:** If you want a more complex activity. Buy a small pot and plant a single indoor flower. Remind the participant to water the plant as appropriate and wait for it to grow. Or, simply pot a new small flower and watch it grow over time.

**Questions for Discussion:** Did you ever plant a garden?  
What did you plant?  
Did you eat the vegetables? Favorites? Least liked?  
Did you ever shell peas?  
Did you ever eat the peas raw?  
Did you ever pick a sun ripened tomato and eat it in the garden?  
Have you ever seen a tomato worm?  
What are your favorite flowers?

## "Stringing Jewelry"

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**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Table

**How to Set Up:** Put a cloth on the table so the beads will not roll away.

**Materials Needed:**

- Beads or cereal
- Large macaroni
- String or shoelace
- Needle if needed
- A glass of water
- Snacks
- Soft music for background

**Where to obtain Materials:** Bead store  
Dollar store  
Craft store  
Children's stores (large bead jewelry kits)

**Activity:**

1. Prepare surface with soft cloth.
2. Set out cups of various colored beads, cereals, candies, etc.
3. Prepare string or shoelace so beads can go on.
4. String beads onto the string or lace.
5. Tie ends together.
6. Wear necklace or eat cereals/candies.

**Modifications:** Large beads and shoelaces can be used for arthritic hands and eye sight challenges. Beads can be substituted for cereal, candy with holes, popcorn or any item that can be strung on a string.

**Questions for Discussion:** What is your favorite color?  
Do you like to eat cereal or candy better?  
Did you ever give your mother a necklace you made from food?  
Where would you like to wear this special necklace?

## "The Soup Pot"

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**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Kitchen

**How to Set Up:** Cover a table with plastic or a cloth to catch spills.

**Materials Needed:**

- Small pot
- Can of soup
- Can opener
- Measuring cup
- Stirring spoon or whisk
- Bowl or cup
- Spoon
- Pot holder or glove

**Where to obtain Materials:** Home  
Grocery store

**Activity:**

1. Choose a can of soup.
2. Read directions on the label.
3. Open can of soup.
4. Measure water or milk to be added (if needed)
5. Stir soup.
6. Heat until cooked.
7. Serve and eat.

**Modifications:** Care receivers can often prepare a simple one step lunch to add activity to their day. Any simple box food can be substituted. Simple cooking can become a feeling of accomplishment. Ten extra minutes means a great deal.

**Questions for Discussion:** What is your favorite kind of soup?  
What toppings do you like to add? (crackers, cheese, etc.)  
Did you ever make homemade soup?  
Does chicken noodle soup really help with a cold?  
Have you ever had a cold soup? A fruit soup?

## “Walking Down Memory Lane”

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**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Table

**How to Set Up:** Spread old photos, magazine pictures and memorabilia items out on a table.

**Materials Needed:**

- Photos
- Magazine pictures
- Memorabilia
- Lamination materials

**Where to obtain Materials:** Albums  
Magazines  
Craft store  
Department store

**Activity:**

1. Sort pictures according to topic (family, friends, outdoors)
2. Go through each sorted pile and ask questions

**Modifications:** This activity is used to reminisce, exercise memory and hand, eye coordination. Any item to be sorted by color or sight can be substituted.

**Questions for Discussion:** Do you know who this is?  
What do you remember about \_\_\_\_\_?  
Do you remember the day this was taken?  
What were you doing? Where were you?  
What was your favorite family vacation?  
Have you ever been to the ocean? Gone swimming there?  
Use any questions to learn about their life.

## “What is THAT?”

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**Preparation Time:** 10 minutes

**Location:** Anywhere

**How to Set Up:** Find a comfortable chair. Sit around the fire, on the back porch, with the grandchildren in the park. Put small items from around the house into a small pliable bag—dark garbage bag, pillow case or small dark bags made about the size of travel sized pillow cases.

**Materials Needed:**

- Dark, pliable bag
- Items to place in the bags
- Soap, toothbrush, hair brush, container of perfume
- Packets of sugar / salt
- Bag of beans or rice
- A baggie full of flower
- Small prizes

**Where to obtain Materials:** Any local grocery or around the house—Fabric can be purchased at discount stores. Use the material to sew small square bags, put small non-perishable items into squares and sew them shut for repeat usage. Number and store these bags in a container with a master list of what item is in each bag.

**Activity:**

1. Find a relaxing gathering space.
2. Have people take turns trying to guess what is in the bag.
3. Give prizes to those who get items correct or just do a round of clapping.
4. Prizes can include small healthy snacks, cheese sticks, a small can of juice, etc.

**Modifications:** You can also have small baggies full of soft foods in the bags and give each person a pen and paper—each person has a list of what is in all the bags. Guess which numbered bag has each of the items on their list and write down the matching bag number.

**Questions for Discussion:** What do you think that is?  
Why do you think it is a \_\_\_\_\_?  
Are you sure?

## “Working Around the House”

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**Preparation Time:** 10 minutes

**Location:** Anywhere

**How to Set Up:** Choose from the activities listed below. Sometimes just being actively engaged in work is the right activity for those with cognitive impairment or those who simply need to feel a sense of accomplishment.

**Materials Needed:**

- Shoes
- Polishing supplies
- Cleaning supplies
- A mess to clean up
- String and newspapers
- Recycle boxes

**Where to obtain Materials:** Around the house

**Activity:**

1. Polish shoes.
2. Polish cutlery.
3. Sweep the porch or sidewalk.
4. Tie bundles of old newspapers together and put in car.
5. Clean the windows to see the birds better.
6. Sort, fold and place laundry into a basket.
7. Try on clothes / shoes in the closet, give old to those in need.

**Modifications:** Structure the activity to meet the person’s level of functioning and mobility. Sometimes they wear the shoes while you polish them. Or they put their finger on the string while you tie it together. The importance is involving them in activities they can still do.

**Questions for Discussion:** Just focus on the task at hand. Give each person step by step instructions as needed for their cognitive skill level. These tasks may not be done to completion, but they are familiar and a person can enjoy the satisfaction of helping or feeling needed.

## “Yahtzee”

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**Preparation Time:** 10 minutes

**Location:** Anywhere with a flat surface—kitchen table, park or picnic table.

**How to Set Up:** Decide where you are going to play. Put a table cloth or towel down so the dice will not roll onto the floor or through the cracks in the picnic table. Buy larger dice to accommodate for arthritis and other mobility or visual challenges.

**Materials Needed:**

- Dice (larger dice)
- Yahtzee cards
- Pen
- Paper
- A drink, water
- Time to relax

**Where to obtain Materials:** Any local grocery, game or department store  
Around the house

**Activity:**

1. Gather around a flat surface.
2. Discuss the game rules.
3. Decide who will keep score.
4. Play the game—modify as needed.
5. Celebrate any wins or accomplishments.
6. Just have fun.

**Modifications:** If someone is memory impaired, have everyone role for the same thing before moving on to the next section of Yahtzee. Continue from line to line until all areas of Yahtzee have been covered. Tally up the scores to see who wins, or just celebrate playing.

**Questions for Discussion:** When was the last time you played a game with dice?  
Have you ever played snake eyes?  
What other games do you like to play?  
What is your favorite number to role with the dice?

## A few resources of published activities...

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**NOTE:** Check local libraries for availability and options!

### Item Title

### Location Information

***ABC's of Activities for Alzheimer's***—Therapeutic activities for person's with dementia.

Amira Choukair Tame  
Trafford Publishing  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

***Alzheimer's Activities.*** Hundreds of Activities for Men and Women with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders.

Rayve Productions  
ISBN 1-877810-80-0  
B. J. FitzRay

***Alzheimer's Activities that Stimulate the Mind***—activities that promote cognitive skill, quality of life and help maintain bonds with our loved ones.

Emilia C. Bazan-Salazar  
McGraw-Hill Publishers  
ISBN 13: 9870071447317

***Art Activities Designed for Seniors***—a guide to activate those in facilities or who are home bound.

Carren Love  
Spiral Bound, 2007 release

***Keeping Busy...*** A handbook of Activities for Person with Disabilities. [www.press.jhu.edu](http://www.press.jhu.edu).

Johns Hopkins University Press  
ISBN 0-8018-5059-2  
James R. Dowling

***Senior Activities Planning Guide***—an organized monthly planning guide to senior activities, parties, events, etc.

Richard N. Driggs  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

***Nostalgic Trivia for Seniors***—activities to keep the mind stimulated.

Gary Grimm and John Artman  
Gary Grimm and Associates  
Publication #GGA136  
[www.ggapublishing.com](http://www.ggapublishing.com)



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[slco.org/aging/](http://slco.org/aging/)

**385.468.3280**

Promoting independence through advocacy, engagement and access to resources