

Daily routines can be helpful for both you — the caregiver — and the person living with Alzheimer's. A planned day allows you to spend less time trying to figure out what to do, and more time on activities that provide meaning and enjoyment.

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Organizing the day

Remember to make time for yourself, or include the person living with dementia in activities that you enjoy — for example, taking a daily walk.

A person with Alzheimer's or other progressive dementia will eventually need a caregiver's assistance to organize the day. Structured and pleasant activities can often reduce agitation and improve mood. Planning activities for a person with dementia works best when you continually explore, experiment and adjust.

Before making a plan, consider:

- The person's likes, dislikes, strengths, abilities and interests.
- How the person used to structure his or her day.
- What times of day the person functions best.
- Ample time for meals, bathing and dressing.
- Regular times for waking up and going to bed (especially helpful if the person with dementia experiences sleep issues or sundowning). Live Chat

Make sure to allow for flexibility within your daily routine for spontaneous activities.

As Alzheimer's disease progresses, the abilities of a person with dementia will change. With creativity, flexibility and problem solving, you'll be able to adapt your daily routine to support these changes.

Checklist of daily activities to consider:

- Household chores.
- Mealtimes.
- Personal care.
- Creative activities (music, art, crafts).
- Spontaneous (visiting friends).
- Intellectual (reading, puzzles).
- Physical.
- Social.
- Spiritual.
- Work-related (making notes).

Writing a plan

When thinking about how to organize the day, consider:

- Which activities work best? Which don't? Why? (Keep in mind that the success of an activity can vary from day-to-day.)

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- Are there times when there is too much going on or too little to do?
- Were spontaneous activities enjoyable or did they create anxiety and confusion?

Don't be concerned about filling every minute with an activity. The person with Alzheimer's needs a balance of activity and rest, and may need more frequent breaks and varied tasks.

Daily plan example (for early- to middle-stages of the disease)

Morning

- Wash, brush teeth, get dressed.
- Prepare and eat breakfast.
- Have a conversation over coffee.
- Discuss the newspaper, try a craft project, reminisce about old photos.
- Take a break, have some quiet time.
- Do some chores together.
- Take a walk, play an active game.

Afternoon

- Prepare and eat lunch, read mail, wash dishes.
- Listen to music, do crossword puzzles, watch TV.
- Do some gardening, take a walk, visit a friend.
- Take a short break or nap.

Evening

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- Prepare and eat dinner, clean up the kitchen.
- Reminisce over coffee and dessert.
- Play cards, watch a movie, give a massage.
- Take a bath, get ready for bed, read a book.

In general, if the person seems bored, distracted or irritable, it may be time to introduce another activity or to take time out for rest. The type of activity and how well it's completed are not as important as the joy and sense of accomplishment the person gets from doing it.

The Alzheimer's Association is in your community.

Find Your Local Chapter



Locate dementia resources, programs and services in your area.

Find Community Resources



Learn how Alzheimer's disease affects the brain.

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