



## **Top Tips for Things to do Family Carers and Friends**

The emphasis is on simple one to one activity ideas to promote conversation, engagement, and companionship.

### **Things to Do at home with your relative**

The following list offers a wide variety of suggestions or possibilities which may or may not be of interest to your relative, and some of which are very simple and obvious. Sometimes when a person is very physically unwell or has advanced dementia, it can be hard to find things which can engage the person's interest. However, it is hoped that there might be something new in this list which would be worth trying. Remember it may not work one day but it might on another.

- Talk about what you have been doing
- Sort out photos of family & friends - from days gone by or recent snaps
- Create a photo album, frame photos, or make a photo collage
- Create a 'Talking' photo album with buttons to record and then press which explain the photograph - purchasable online
- Make a special scrapbook or a memory box of significant objects based on personal life history
- Help write or record an autobiography
- Share favourite stories and memories
- Share holiday snaps, souvenirs, postcards, even maps and tales of your journey
- Read newspapers & magazines aloud to keep your relative in touch
- Jointly look at magazines with large colourful pictures and invite opinions and comments on the contents whether it is fashion preferences or political views
- Subscribe to a relative's hometown newspaper, download it or have it delivered
- Read religious (where appropriate) or inspirational articles, magazines, or books - a 'thought for the day' or 'hope for the week'
- Read letters from family and friends
- Bring recorded greetings from family & friends
- Help with writing letters & cards
- Find a pen pal and help with keeping in touch
- Create a collage poster with pictures and words cut from magazines
- Read articles related to the season or next holiday to talk about
- Have a picnic
- Enjoy a favourite drink or food together
- If you play an instrument offer to do a private concert
- Try teaching simple tunes on an instrument
- Sing or hum together
- Play 'name that tune' with CDs, YouTube, or music on the radio
- Create a favourite playlist and listen to music together
- Play simple charades - e.g., miming an action to guess what it is
- Wind wool together for a knitting project

- Try drawing or painting together – use the many adults colouring books
- Make simple gifts for others
- Organise the sewing basket, button box, socks drawer or toolbox together – sort in sizes and colours
- Make or repaint a bird feeder or house to hang outside
- Read a book on bird watching together
- Do your mending while you chat – watching is an activity too!
- Brush, comb or style your relative's hair – give a simple head massage at the same time
- Offer a pamper with make-up, perfume, aftershave or manicure
- Plan a garden makeover together and look through a seed catalogue
- Plant and look after an indoor windowsill garden
- Create a terrarium (tabletop garden arrangement) together
- Play word games and trivia together
- Play cards or table board games together
- Do crosswords together or do yours out loud – listening is an activity too.
- Do jigsaws together even if the person can only watch or pick up the pieces
- Watch television together and discuss the programme you have seen
- Watch the Soaps together and discuss the dilemmas
- Watch an old favourite movie or musical together
- Hold your own 2 person tournaments or competitions and keep a running tally of the scores. Think about quoits, skittles, quizzes, Nintendo Wi etc.
- Create a story from a picture e.g. looking at a photograph or piece of art and imagining what is happening; who the people are, what they are doing or thinking etc
- Have a session of 'retail therapy' and do some shopping online
- When possible, take your relative shopping if only to 'window shop' or empty your latest grocery shop onto the kitchen table and talk about all the items
- Choose recipes to cook with your relative or to talk about and share favourites
- Enjoy a treat together
- Go for a walk 'round the block' inside or outside the building – take time to stop and look at the view, talk to people along the way and point out anything new or interesting
- Give a gentle hand massage using aromatherapy scented oils or hand cream
- Stimulate the sense of smell- spices, perfume, or flowers
- Show different textured fabrics to touch- silk, cashmere, velvet etc:
- Watch film footage of a recent holiday together
- Watch home movies made with a camcorder or your phone together
- Use YouTube or the internet to play favourite film clips, comedy sketches, musicians or amusing clips of children, animals etc
- Share grandchildren's artwork or school papers
- Take care of pets
- Start a collection or hobby that you both enjoy
- Invite friends and family to afternoon tea
- Do simple exercises together – use music and actions like "Play the violin, put the washing on the line." to make them fun
- Read a chapter of a novel, a short story or a few poems
- Write poetry or a short story together
- Look at and listen to an old-fashioned music box
- Make a "joy box"(decorated shoe box) filled with fun and favourite things
- Discuss seasonal changes looking out of the window

- Keep a “window diary” of interesting things that happen outside
- Keep a journal of interesting discussions and upcoming events
- Make a pot pourri together and hang it up
- Tell jokes to one another, bring along a joke book to keep it going
- Help with writing letters to family and friends
- Surprise your relative and invite along one of their friends for a visit
- Take photos to send to friends and family
- Take a walk together, weather permitting, or just sit outside
- Invite the children of family and friends and enjoy watching them play
- Make items for charity
- Debate important matters
- Celebrate holidays or festivals
- Keep a track of favourite sports events or teams
- Learn a new word or words whenever using a dictionary
- Challenge a relative in a spelling contest
- Play along with TV game shows or develop your own
- Dance, or tap your feet, to your relative’s favourite dance music
- Read a travel book or brochure & dream about a fantasy holiday
- Use small rhythm instruments to make your own music
- Read your star sign forecasts in a daily paper and talk about it
- Play noughts and crosses or similar games
- Talk about local landmarks and how the community has changed – use ‘Google Maps’ or similar to seek out places of interest
- Make lists of your relatives’ favourite foods, films, movie stars, music etc;
- Talk about what you would do if you won the lottery
- Design and make your own Christmas and holiday cards to send
- Toss cards or other items into a hat or a box
- Hold your relative’s hand and be a good listener – sometimes less is more
- Try your hand at drawing each other portraits when possible
- Give hugs and affection
- With closed eyes see if your relative can guess different flavours you supply
- Talk about, recite or play nursery rhymes and songs from childhood
- Tidy up together
- Debate important matters

If you would like to discuss the information included in this resource, please call the NAPA Helpline; our free and confidential activity support service.

