

Tips for Keeping Residents Engaged

In general, staff should be engaging with residents at every interaction, asking questions about their day, how they are feeling, and what they have been doing.

Make sure residents are staying in touch with family and friends by helping them set up video chat, phone calls, or writing cards and letters.

Ask your residents what they would like to do. If it is something usually done in groups, think of ways to modify the activity, so it will work within guidelines from the CDC.

Technology

If your residents have access to their own computers, tablets, e-readers, etc., explore virtual activities, such as:

- Online Museums – many museums now have online content, like the [Museum of Modern Art](#) (MoMA).
- Online classes - many universities now have free, online classes along with sites like [Coursera](#).
- Contact your local community college and universities to see if they have any online classes that may be appropriate for your residents. Ask if they would be willing to waive fees for this time. Due to many schools closing, email may be the best form of communication instead of calling.
- Puzzles and card games like Sudoku, Solitaire, etc.
- If your resident practices a particular faith, look into religious services that are streamed online.
- The [Metropolitan Opera](#) (The Met) provides free streaming of its operas each night.

Reading

- Magazines/Newspapers/Books, etc. – See if your local library has any extra magazines or newspapers they can donate, or if a store is willing to sell them for a reduced bulk price or just donate them. Do not share magazines, books, or newspapers between residents.
- For residents with tablets or e-readers, many libraries have online subscriptions for free and some online stores have many items available for free like magazines, newspapers, and books (e.g. Amazon with a Kindle device/app).
- Depending on appropriateness for residents, staff could read a book over the intercom system – as if they were listening to the radio.

Arts and Crafts

- Crossword puzzles
- Sudoku
- Adult coloring books

- Knitting
- Sewing
- Cross Stitch
- Needlepoint
- Jewelry-making
- Macramé
- Quilting
- Painting – watercolors, finger paints, paint-by-numbers, etc.
- Puzzles – for adults living with dementia, consider large pieces and puzzles with fewer pieces
- Scrapbooking – reminiscent pages of their life or favorite things
- Explore more arts and crafts ideas online, like on Pinterest.com.

You can download puzzles and pictures to paint from the internet and use with existing supplies or order online.

Also, build these activities as a way to help give residents additional purpose. Many organizations will take donations of crafts like knitted caps for the NICU, pillowcases for foster kids entering care, and blankets for hospice, among others. [Project Linus](#), for example is a non-profit that gives homemade blankets to children in need and offers free patterns.

Exercise/Movement

- Tai Chi – a great activity for helping to increase flexibility and help reduce falls
- Modified Pilates and yoga for calming and strength
- Dancing – even if staff have a couple minutes to put on a fun song and get a resident moving

Other Possible Activities

- Music Therapy – or a fun name that song.
- Board games/card games that are for individuals like Solitaire or War.
- Meditation – there are a lot of free meditations videos online and through streaming services
- Movies – look for movies from your cable provider or streaming service, let residents know, pop some popcorn, and offer movie trivia with prizes to the winners.
- Bingo Over the Intercom – you can mix it up. It doesn't have to be your typical bingo; you could do things like activities (e.g., have you read a newspaper story today, do you have red on, etc.)
- Tea Party for One – serve cookies or some other fun treat with coffee or tea in the afternoon
- Ice Cream Non-Social – everyone has ice cream in their rooms with fun toppings
- Trivia Question for the Day – award small prizes

- Baby Pictures – have residents and staff share baby pictures. Provide copies to residents and have them guess who is in the picture (give options). Award prizes.
- Choose a country or a state a day to learn about and serve a treat that represents that country or state (UK – teatime, Italy – pasta or pizza for dinner, Kansas – BBQ, Indiana – snickerdoodles, etc.). This should be done over an intercom or individual copies given to residents.
- Bird Watching – identify birds outside of the windows
- If your community/center has a garden or schools have gardens, buy seeds and provide each resident with a small pot or two. Residents can watch the seeds grow and take care of them, as many require minimal work but are fun to watch grow each day. You can find many online to be delivered directly to your community/center.
- Journaling – have residents write something new each day, perhaps about their favorite trip, teacher, book, etc. Have staff ask each resident they interact with about the “question of the day.”
- Have residents write down what they are thankful for each day (staff can participate too). It has been shown this can help elevate moods. Share these with others (especially if thankful for staff!).