

Features

Activities Described For Memory-Impaired Loved Ones

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People interested in learning how best to socially engage their memory-impaired loved ones attended an informational session on the topic held January 18 at Church Hill Village, a new assisted living complex at 2 The Boulevard. Tracy Brady, a certified dementia practitioner with Visiting Angels, presented the subject.

Ms Brady is the executive director of business development and community relations for Visiting Angels in Fairfield, Litchfield, and New Haven counties. Visiting Angels is a private non-medical firm which provides living assistance services.

The session was the first of a number of public talks on assisted living, known as the 2020 Caregiver Support and Education Series scheduled in the coming months at Church Hill Village.

Those attending the event listened attentively as Ms Brady described a range of activities suitable for people with memory impairment. Visiting Angels offers an “active and engaged program” for people with memory loss.

The 67,000-square-foot Church Hill Village complex, which has 71 resident beds overall, includes facilities for 49 assisted living residents, and 22 memory care residents. Memory care is intended for people with memory loss, cognitive impairment, dementia, or Alzheimer's disease.

Workers at the memory care unit will provide services to people who require around-the-clock attentive care in a physically secure environment.

Active And Engaged

Ms Brady's talk focused on how families can keep their loved ones with memory deficits active and engaged in their homes through various activities. Providing such activities is considered a positive alternative to having people with memory loss watch television for extended periods, she said.

One activity known as "tour guide" involves themed events which spotlight a region of the world, with the activities keyed to the foods and culture of that place, she said.

Also, activity kits can be provided to those with memory impairments, based on those people's particular interests, she said.

"We find out what our clients' needs are, and we customize the activities for them," Ms Brady said.

"I do food demonstrations at local senior centers," she said.

Arts and crafts provide a range of activities for the memory-impaired. Assembling bird feeders can be rewarding, considering the work involved in assembly and then watching from a distance as wild birds feed.

Cake decoration makes for good fun for the memory-impaired, Ms Brady said. The pleasant aromas of baked goods can positively rekindle positive olfactory experiences among the memory-impaired.

Also, keeping a journal, either alone, or with the aid of another, can be a rewarding experience, she said. Journaling has the added benefit of producing a keepsake, she said.

'Caring Cards'

Ms Brady explained that people interacting with a memory-impaired person also can use, "Caring Cards," which are cards with questions printed on them designed to be conversation starters or "icebreakers." These cards are the invention of Southbury resident Kathie Nitz, a self-proclaimed "life strategist" and speaker.

The cards list questions such as, "What did you enjoy most about raising children?" "What food or drink was a special treat when you were a child?" and "Who were your favorite or most interesting neighbors when you were growing up?"

One woman in the audience asked how best to deal with the stubbornness that sometimes becomes a trait of those who are aging, such as her mother.

Ms Brady responded that she understands that problem, noting that her elderly grandmother is reluctant to attend a local senior citizen center.

"My grandmother is 98... She won't go to the senior center because they are old there," Ms Brady quipped.

Ms Brady suggested getting memory-impaired people involved in gardening as a means to spark social interaction. Gardening can be simplified through the use of raised growing beds or the use of planters within residences, she said.

"We typically do herbal gardens," she said.

Stimulating Interaction

Other activities that can stimulate a memory-impaired person's interaction with loved ones include massage, manicures, pedicures, and aromatherapy involving the use of fragrant oils, she said.

Leafing through albums of photographs can be a positive stimulus for the memory-impaired, prompting favorable responses, Ms Brady said.

Sometimes something as simple as sharing a meal makes for a good experience that brings a family into closer contact with an aging love one who has memory loss.

The activities keyed to improving interaction are designed to reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, which extend from a sense of loneliness experienced by those with memory loss.

Ms Brady offered a list of activities for homebound people who have memory impairment that included listening to music, dancing together, exercising with a ball, reading books, baking cookies, folding laundry, discussing great inventions, arranging flowers, and looking at a globe or map and identifying states and countries, among others.

Of the value of activities to engage the memory-impaired, Ms Brady said, "It's really just 'being in touch' with them... It's just so imperative that we keep our loved ones engaged," she added.

Learn more about Church Hill Village and its public programs and talks by visiting <https://www.seniorlifestyle.com/property/connecticut/church-hill-village/>.

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- or a scary movie 13.64%

44 votes · 44 answers

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