

Positive Visiting

Visiting someone in a nursing home keeps them connected socially and emotionally. It helps make them stronger. Additionally, your presence at the home can help assure better care.

What can you do after you've said "hello"?

- Give your loved one the personal touch. Hold hands, hug, share a smooch, touch cheeks. Gently massage hands or legs. Give a backrub. Use scented lotions.
- Give a manicure or a pedicure. File nails, pick out polish.
- Attend a scheduled activity together.
- Change the scenery. Take a walk – outside or inside. Go for a drive. Look out another window, visit another area of the home.
- Watch a television program together. A ballgame or comedy can break the ice.
- Read out loud – newspapers, books, magazines. Bring along the local paper to share the community news.
- Share a mutual religious experience – pray together, study religious stories.
- Look at pictures – photo albums, scrapbooks, new snapshots.
- Write cards or letters together. Sometimes a steady hand is appreciated.
- Help your loved one make calls to old friends and family.
- Reminisce. Record the memories via video, audio, or by hand. (What a great keepsake!)
- Bring favorite foods to share. (Be sure to ask the staff first about diet restrictions.)
- Look through shopping catalogs. Decide which items other friends and relatives might like.
- If you do your loved one's laundry, bring the laundry unfolded and ask them to help fold.
- Arrange flowers together.
- Play cards, board games, or do puzzles together.
- Clip coupons together. Share the clipped coupons with staff.

- Bring a mini-version of a lifetime hobby. For example, a fisherman can tie flies or play an electronic casting game. A quilter can choose and cut fabrics from swatches. A mechanic can oil tools.
- Bring things to listen to. Bring a loved one's favorite music to share. Bring audio messages from friends and relatives. Record children and grandchildren talking or singing. Make an audio recording of your loved one's favorite places – a backyard garden, a racetrack, a school, a mechanic's garage. Ask the Activity Department for assistance with record players, tape machines, CD players.
- Bring videos of family events or of movies they might like. Call ahead to ask the Activity Department to assist with a VCR or DVD player.
- Bring your well-behaved pet to visit. (Be sure to ask the staff first about any restrictions.)
- Come at dinner time and share a meal together.
- Cook together – bake cookies, make pudding, mix punch. Ask the Activity Department if there is an activity room that can be used. Perhaps the kitchen staff can bake an item you have prepared together.
- Bring children and grandchildren. Have them draw pictures or make stories to leave behind. Put them to work in an activity.

Some other thoughts:

- Ask when your loved one would like you to visit. If you can, establish a regular visiting plan. Come if you say you are coming.
- Slow down. Coming in like a whirlwind will exhaust you both.
- Find a quiet place to visit. Those with hearing loss or dementia will appreciate it.
- Sit down, so you are at eye level. Sit close, but respect personal space.
- Don't yell – speak slowly and clearly. Make sure your loved one can see your face.
- Make sure there is enough light for your activity. Avoid glare.
- If a loved one has dementia, you may need to talk about memories farther back in time. Rather than saying "Do you remember...?", try "I remember...".
- It's okay to sit together quietly. Not every moment needs to be filled with words or activities.
- Allow your loved one to express feelings of sadness, anger or frustration. Acknowledge those feelings and listen.