



How to Help Your Loved One Stay Socially Active in a Skilled Nursing Facility

In our last issue, we talked about the importance of staying engaged in life as we age. One of the biggest advantages of having a loved one being cared for in a nursing facility is that there are always people around, providing numerous opportunities for socialization. Today's nursing homes have an activities schedule that would rival those at many social clubs. Exercise classes, movie nights, social outings, cooking classes, Bingo, book clubs and support groups are found at most senior living centers, and they provide wonderful opportunities for connecting with others who share similar interests and life stories.

If you have a loved one who resides in a healthcare facility, keeping them socially active may seem challenging. Of course, it's good to visit your loved one as much as possible – not only to provide companionship, but to see what socialization opportunities are available.

Here are some other tips to improve your loved one's socialization opportunities in a skilled nursing facility:

- ***When you visit your loved one, ask to meet their friends and make sure they have a good support system.*** If you see your loved one seems lonely, talk to the staff. Together, you may be able to come up with plan to get them involved in more activities and events.
- ***If they don't seem engaged, encourage them to join any clubs or participate in events that may be offered.*** With the variety of options, there is almost certainly some activity they would enjoy – sometimes all it takes is a gentle push to get them involved.
- ***When you visit, consider bringing others along***



with you. Seeing a new, yet familiar, face can go a long way in making someone's day. If allowed, take along the family pet. Connections don't have to be with other humans in order to be beneficial. In fact, a program in Germany with nursing home residents living with dementia showed that participants in animal-assisted therapy sessions showed improved verbal communication and attentiveness.

- ***Plan an activity.*** If your loved one is able to take a "field trip," take them out to a museum, movie or a restaurant, which will allow them to connect with a whole new group of people. Encourage them to bring along some friends.

Older Americans living in a senior care setting have an advantage over those who live alone in staying socially active. Today's nursing facilities understand this and consider socialization to be part of residents' overall health and wellness plans.

Source: Real Properties in association with IlluminAge Communication Partners; copyright 2018 IlluminAge.

Helping Seniors Manage Their Social Security Benefits

The National Council on Aging shares information about serving as a Representative Payee



Each year, millions of older adults become victims of financial exploitation. Protecting those who are most vulnerable—including those with cognitive impairments—is essential to ending the cycle of elder abuse.

Created in 1939 as an amendment to the Social Security Act, the Representative Payee Program is one tool that can help. Representative Payees assist individuals with physical and mental impairments, as well as minor children, who cannot manage or direct the management of their Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Who qualifies to be a Representative Payee?

A Representative Payee is an appointed individual or organization who is deemed appropriate by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to manage the Social Security or SSI benefits for a single beneficiary or multiple beneficiaries.

Whereas a family member may be the Representative Payee for their loved one, an Organizational Representative Payee (some of whom operate on a fee-for-service basis) will often manage benefits for large numbers of beneficiaries. Other examples of payees include friends, nonprofit organizations, mental health service residences/facilities, and social services agencies.

What are the responsibilities of a Representative Payee?

When a Representative Payee is appointed, that in-

dividual, group, or organization is responsible for using the benefits to pay for the current and future needs of the beneficiary, and saving any benefits not needed to meet current needs.

Representative Payees are required to provide Social Security with a short form (accounting), which shows expenditures for food and housing and separately, personal spending (recreational expenses, clothes, etc.). The payee must ensure that the beneficiary's bills are paid and that the beneficiary does not have a high level of excess income, which could disqualify them from SSI benefits.

A growing need

According to the Social Security Advisory Board issue brief Representative Payees: A Call to Action, more than 8 million Americans have an appointed Representative Payee managing their Social Security or SSI benefits. SSA recognizes that there is a growing need for older adults to have a Representative Payee, as baby boomers are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population. Inevitably, there will be a growing segment of aging adults with both physical and cognitive disabilities in need of assistance with managing their SSA benefits.

What can you do to help?

First, you can serve as a volunteer Representative Payee. To find opportunities near you, perform this simple web search: Volunteer Representative Payee programs in (fill in your location).

You also can advocate for someone in need by becoming familiar with your local Area Agencies on Aging (www.n4a.org) or your local Adult Protective Services offices (www.napsa-now.org/get-help/help-in-your-area). Both of these resources provide wraparound supports for older adults and adults with disabilities.

Source: Randy Feliciano, MPA, a Program Manager with NCOA's Center for Benefits Access, where he provides training and support to a network of Benefits Enrollment Centers across the U.S. Prior to joining NCOA, Randy worked for the Department of Human Services in Arlington, VA, where he ran a legal guardianship program and a Personal Advocate Service.

September Is Healthy Aging Month

Find the names of 20 ingredients of senior health and well-being in this puzzle!



- BALANCE CLASS
- CARE SUPPORT
- CHECKUPS
- DENTIST
- EDUCATION
- EYE CARE
- HEALTH CARE
- HOME SAFETY
- HYDRATION
- IMMUNIZATIONS

Y	T	I	V	I	T	C	A	L	A	C	I	S	Y	H	P
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E	O	A	W	M	E	R	A	C	H	T	L	A	E	H	S
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U	A	M	E	N	T	A	L	E	X	E	R	C	I	S	E



- MEDICATIONS
- MENTAL EXERCISE
- NUTRITION
- PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
- PLANNING
- POSITIVE ATTITUDE
- QUIT SMOKING
- SOCIALIZATION
- WALKING
- WEIGHTS

Willow Ridge Healthcare
400 Deronda Street
Amery, WI 54001
(715) 268.-8171

Riverbend Senior Living
475 Golfview Lane
Amery, WI 54001
(715) 268-9949

Reversing the Risk of Heart Failure



We often think of heart health in terms of prevention. But a study from UT Southwestern Medical Center shows that exercise can not only prevent but reverse the damage that leads to heart failure. Study author Dr. Benjamin Levine studied a group of middle-aged people, half of whom took part in an exercise program. After two years, the group that exercised had notably healthier hearts. Dr. Levine compared the difference to “a stretchy, new rubber band versus one that has gotten stiff sitting in a drawer.” He advises, “Based on a series of studies performed by our team over the past five years, this

‘dose’ of exercise has become my prescription for life. I think people should be able to do this as part of their personal hygiene—just like brushing your teeth and taking a shower.” Talk to your doctor about an exercise program that’s right for you.

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