

Spring is Budding

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“Oh give us pleasure in the flower today; And give us not to think so far away, as their certain harvest; keep us here all simply in the Springtime of the year.” This Robert Frost poem speaks of the sweet allure of spring. Who can resist spring’s invitation to revive the soul?

As we consider opportunities to enhance the lives of our dear elder friends, let us examine creative ways to involve them in this magical season.

Before the first blooms or warmed breezes, spring’s promise can be awakened with a fragrant, colorful Hyacinth plant. Bring a spring adventure to your dear senior by involving them in the planning process. Look over a map together. Show them photos of possible destinations, such as a nearby park, lake or country farm. Go through a cook book and decide the perfect foods for a spring time picnic menu together. Anticipating an event always magnifies the experience!

Enlist and encourage family members and friends of various ages to be a part of these outings. Intergenerational involvement is essential in redirecting our society to embrace the untapped resources in honoring our elder population. Children and teens are invaluable as they interact and learn from the wisdom and experiences of their grandparents. The simple spring outing can be the catalyst that brings family enjoyment and meaning into the lives of our loved ones.

Take time to locate that perfect park setting or farm visit. Preparing a spot with colorful picnic tablecloths and pretty spring flowers will add to the atmosphere. Enlist a friend who may have access to a sweet puppy, kitten or bunny to share in the joy. There are often willing farmers who would welcome visitors to view a new born calf or baby lamb.

Be equipped for meaningful conversations. Prepare questions to stimulate memories of the past springs. Discussions can be constructed around specific topics which include: earliest childhood memories; courtship and marriage recollections; events from their child raising days; work and or hobby experiences; and retirement opportunities. By examining life’s events chronologically, participants are able to achieve ego-integration by in effect “putting their lives in order”. Reminiscing from early childhood is often so happily recalled and opens up a flood of interesting conversations. Consider using “props” to stimulate memory. Antique tools, cooking devices from the past or outdated clothing can prompt sweet thoughts. All ages will benefit and enjoy these sharing times. By creating opportunities for rich communication for our elderly, it will promote their sense of integrity and self respect. Our seniors long to be productive and contribute meaningfully to their world. Additional topics for consideration are:

1. What are the best things about your age now?
2. What are difficult parts of growing up?

3. What is your secret to living a long life?
4. What is the biggest change you have ever experienced in your lifetime?
5. Describe one of your early memories.

Enjoying the spring time in our wonderful state of Michigan is easy to do! Just step outside and smell the fresh air with its fragrant aromas.

Caregiver's Corner is provided as a public service of the **Caregiver Resource Network**. The Caregiver Resource Network is a collaboration of West Michigan organizations dedicated to providing for the needs and welfare of family and professional caregivers within the community. Funded by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan with Older American's Act Title III-E, Family Caregiver Support funds. For more information consult our website at www.caregiverresource.net or call toll free at 1-888-456-5664.