

COMMUNICATION CONNECTION

ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF YOUR VISIT WITH THE OLDER ADULT

Kathryn Kilpatrick

Whether you are the caregiver, a friend, the friendly visitor or a volunteer helping out around the home or transporting an older adult, you have many opportunities to share, connect and get to know each other better.

Our feature this month provides suggested activities that you might do to enhance the quality of your visit together or a different way to spark a conversation. Since reminiscence is such an important aspect of the conversations of many older adults, several interesting ideas are included. Try some these or add some of your own creativity!

- Your time and efforts are so appreciated and when you give of your time and listen to their stories you can begin a very special connection that allows them to reflect and begin to feel comfortable sharing. The meaningful exchanges that come from these visits will continue to enrich your life and your volunteer experience.
- Check your library for materials. Begin a visitor's lending library at your church that people can use a resource when visiting.
- Look for suggestions on how to communicate with the older adult with visual or hearing difficulties in our next newsletter.
- Bring along some of their favorite magazines. If they are having trouble reading, you may want to read to them. Pick something that is not too long at first and find out things that appeal to them. Another suggestion would be to use their local paper, one from their hometown or a local church publication.
- If they always loved puzzles – crossword, hidden word, or word unscrambles - do them together. If they are having trouble reading the smaller print, have it enlarged for them.
- Play some old time favorite games together, maybe solitaire or checkers. If they are having difficulty, play as a team against someone else.
- Work jigsaw puzzles together that remind them of certain places or times.
- Keep a disposable camera on hand to take pictures of your visit and help them begin a visitor's guest book with well wishes or a journal of some of the stories shared on your visit. Other visitors can look at the pictures and it may trigger ideas of things to do during their visit time.

- Get a book on tape to listen to together. You may want to take several visits to finish a book. Pick the condensed version of a favorite author or a specific one with short inspirational or biblical stories.
- Have them get out some of the family pictures and tell you some of their stories. See if they would like you to write down some of their memories and stories. If the pictures are not in an album, you might want to begin one for them. Put the picture on the page, write the stories on an index card and put it in the album under the picture.
- Have them share stories about some of the smaller mementos that they have collected – items that may have a special significance.
- Watch old shows on the TV together or rent a special video that brings back memories. If they do not have the special cable stations, record some programs of interest and bring them along to watch together or leave for them to watch later.
- Borrow tapes of old radio shows from the library and listen to them together.
- Bring along some old copies of magazines like Life and look at the pictures. Norman Rockwell pictures are wonderful conversation starters.
- Bring in some of their favorite music to listen to together. If you are musically inclined, you can do a sing-a-long – or just enjoy listening to the music together. There may be a particular type of music or a certain artist that brings back special memories for them.
- Check the library or bookstores for books that review the century and just thumb through the pages and look at the headlines and the pictures. See where the conversation leads and the stories that come from the process. Read a story of interest together and reminisce or else read it to them if they are having difficulty.
- Ideas for conversation starters – Sometimes it is easier if you share some of your story first, then they share theirs. Take turns, letting them go first the next time. See if they have some questions for you.
 - What was the town like where you grew up?
 - What do you remember about school?
 - What was one of your favorite foods as a child?
 - What is the farthest you have been away from home?

INTERFAITH CAREGIVER'S NEWSLETTER @ 2000 COMMUNICATION CONNECTION

[FOR ADDITIONAL IDEAS VISIT WEBSITE](#)

[PRODUCTS - TIME WELL SPENT
SO WHAT DO YOU THINK
WISDOM ACROSS THE AGES](#)

COMMUNICATION CONNECTION

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Kathryn Kilpatrick

Holidays are a time of getting together with loved ones, friends, family, and neighbors. It is also a time of gathering around and sharing stories as you reminisce of times past and some of the old traditions that have been passed down from one generation to the next.

Here are just a few conversation starters from one of my products, **So What Do You Think? Talk, Talk, Talk**, that can be used to enhance the quality of your times together.

Write each question out on a piece of paper and put it in a decorative bowl. Leave them on the table for people to pick up when they are visiting.

You can have them answer the question then ask someone else the same question or just pass the bowl around after a meal and pick a question to answer.

Remember there are no right or wrong answers. Be creative and make sure you involve both young and old!

If someone is not able to join you over the holidays, involve him or her by asking questions during a phone call. Enjoy learning more about each other and yourself!

- Talk about something you would like to see invented.
- Talk about someone who makes you smile.
- What is your favorite time of day? What do you like to do?
- If you were a cat or a dog, who would you want to be your owner? Why?
- What is the farthest you have ever been from home? What were you doing there?
- What would be some things you would do to show someone you care about them?
- Talk about a TV program you enjoyed watching years ago.
- Talk about something someone did for you the other day that you appreciated.
- What are some of the qualities you admire in people?
- If you could change places with a famous person for a day, who would it be? Why did you choose that person?
- Talk about a chore you do not like doing.
- If you were having a bad day, what would you like someone to do for you?
- Talk about someone in history you admire.
- Talk about someone you have helped.
- What are three things you usually think about each day?

During the holiday often many generations gather to celebrate and share time together. Here are questions from one of the categories in my newest product, **Wisdom Across the Ages – Young and Old Learning From Each Other**. Pick someone from a generation older or younger than yourself and share your answers to these holiday questions with each other.

Questions to ask the older person:

What were your holiday celebrations like as a child?

Tell about a holiday tradition that you enjoy.

What is special to you about the holidays?

Who would you like to see at your next holiday celebration?

Questions to ask the younger person:

What is your favorite holiday?

Where do you usually spend your holidays?

Why are the holidays a special time for you?

What do you like to do to help when there is a holiday?

Happy holidays to you and your loved ones. May this be a special time of communication and connection as you share time together and some of your stories.

FOCUS on Mature Lifestyles

© 2000 COMMUNICATION CONNECTION

FOR ADDITIONAL IDEAS VISIT WEBSITE

PRODUCTS - TIME WELL SPENT
SO WHAT DO YOU THINK
WISDOM ACROSS THE AGES