

Getting to Know You

Activity Ideas

Long-term care facilities are their own communities full of people (residents, staff, and visitors) who have had such varied lives and interesting experiences. Getting people together to talk about their lives, interests, jobs, vacations, etc. fosters that sense of community. Who knew that Mr. Smith and Mrs. Jones went to the same high school? And how interesting that Mr. Brown traveled to every continent in his job as an airline pilot. Knowing details about a person's life can make caring for them and communicating with them a much easier task. It will also help to foster positive relationships - even friendships.

Sometimes people need encouragement to share information about themselves and their past experiences, and others just a willing audience who are ready to listen. These activity ideas will work well for an Activities Director or Social Services staff, or for use during a Resident Council meeting. Through these activities, you can get at individual preferences and learn about individual residents.

On the next couple pages are some ice-breaker game ideas that you can use to get to know residents' likes and dislikes and hear some stories that they can share with you. You can use most of these activities one-on-one or in small groups; at formal activities or informal gatherings, such as encouraging residents sitting at a table together at dinner to share their favorite vacation memory. Or playing one of the ice-breaker games during a scheduled craft time. Or asking each resident one question as you're helping him or her get dressed and groomed for the day.

Be creative and get to know each other!

Activity I. PERSONAL ADVENTURES

Take turns sharing the memorable events of your lives:

- What was the scariest thing that ever happened to you?
- The funniest?
- The best?
- The worst?
- The most embarrassing?
- What have you done that you are most proud of?

Activity II. WHAT IF?

Take turns answering these hypothetical questions and then invent some of your own:

- If you were king or queen of a country, how would you use your power?
- If you could be the best on your block at something, what would it be?
- If you could live any place in the world, where would you live and why?
- Describe your perfect vacation. Where would you visit and who would you want to travel with you?
- If you were stranded on a deserted island and could eat only one kind of food for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- If you could make up a holiday, what would it be and how would you celebrate it?

Activity III. FACT OR FIB

Tell residents that you are going to share some information about yourself. They'll learn about some of your background, hobbies, and interests from the 60-second oral "biography" that you will present. When you finish your presentation, tell the participants that you are going to tell five things about yourself. Four of your statements should tell things that are true and that were part of your presentation; one of the five statements are a total fib. This activity is most fun if some of the true facts are some of the most surprising things about you and if the "fib" sounds like something that could very well be true. Tell everyone they can take notes and refer to them to tell which statement the fib is. Next, invite each resident to create a biography and a list of five statements -- four facts and one fib -- about himself or herself. Then give each person a chance to present the 60-second oral biography and to test the others by presenting his or her own "fact or fib quiz." You can have residents do this part of the activity in small groups.

Activity IV. CIRCULAR FACT OR FIB

Here's a variation on the previous activity: Organize residents into two groups of equal size. One group forms a circle equally spaced around the perimeter of the room. There will be quite a bit of space between people. The other group forms a circle inside the first circle; each person faces one of the people in the first group. Give the facing pairs two minutes to share their 60-second oral "biographies." While each resident is talking, the partner takes notes. After each pair completes the activity, the residents on the inside circle move clockwise to face the next person in the outer circle. People in the outer circle remain stationary throughout the activity. When all residents have had an opportunity to share their biographies with one another, ask them to take turns each sharing facts and fibs with the large group. The other residents refer to their notes or try to recall which fact is really a fib.

Activity V. CHAINGANG

NOTE: This activity can also be used as a staff exercise/team building activity

Learn about each other's hidden talents. Begin by asking the participants "Who can do something really well?" After a brief discussion about some of everyone's talents, pass out paper and ask participants to write down five things they do well. Then provide each person with five different-colored paper strips. Have each participant write a different talent on separate paper strips, then create a mini paper chain with the strips by linking the five talents together. As participants complete their mini chains, use extra strips of paper to link the mini chains together to create one long chain. Have residents hold the growing chain as you link the pieces together. Once the entire chain is constructed and linked, lead a discussion about what the chain demonstrates - for example, all the residents have talents; all of them have things they do well; together, they have many talents; if they work together, they can accomplish anything; their lives are better when they work together and value each other than when each individual feels alone. Hang the chain in the room as a constant reminder of the talents they possess and the benefits of teamwork.

Activity VI. CANDYSHARE

Pass around a bag of little candies (M&M's work great) and have each person take a few. Don't eat the candies yet! In turn, each person has to tell one thing about him or her for every candy taken. After their turn, they can eat the candy.

Variation: Give each color a category and have the participants share things related to that color. For example: red= tell something about your family, green= tell something that you like to eat, blue= tell something about the work you used to do, yellow = tell what you like to do in your spare time.

Activity VII. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE ...

Test your knowledge about resident's favorite things by spending an evening together creating flash cards. Create two sets of index-sized cards on which to write questions and answers. One set should have questions and on the other set, write what you think will be the resident's answer. The cards are a gold mine of information about the resident's likes and dislikes, and ideas for future thoughtful surprises.

What is your favorite...

- | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| ... part of the day? | ... dessert? | ...leisure activity/hobby? |
| ... book? | ... movie? | ... meal? |
| ... past work? | ...restaurant? | ... clothing? |
| ... color? | ...season? | ... section of the country? |
| ... memory? | ... flower? | ... Sunday afternoon activity? |
| ... quote? | ... artist? | ... game/thing you did as a child |
| ... song? | | |

Bonus: What are the three things you would take with you on a desert island?

Activity VIII. GET TO KNOW YOU BINGO

Create Bingo "Cards" by making a table with 9 or 12 boxes. In each box, write a statement, such as: Never been skiing, born in another country, lived in this town their whole life... Each person gets a card. They must then find someone different to fit into each of the categories and get his or her signature on their papers. The first person to fill in all the boxes wins! (See attached sample "card")

Get to Know You Bingo

NEVER BEEN SKIING	FAVORITE MEAL IS BREAKFAST	OWNED A PET
TRAVELLED TO ANOTHER COUNTRY	HAS GREAT- GRANDCHILDREN	WENT TO COLLEGE
LIKES TO LISTEN TO MUSIC	LIVED IN THIS TOWN THEIR WHOLE LIFE	LIKES TO DO PUZZLES
HAS BEEN TO THE BEACH	BELONGS TO THE RESIDENT COUNCIL	HAS FAMILY IN ANOTHER STATE