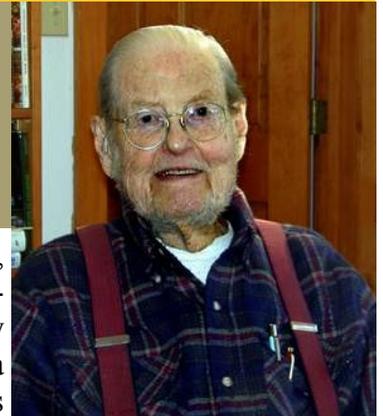


Senior Minutes

In Search of Excellence for Clinical and Management Issues

Tools to Help Families Remember Their Loved One

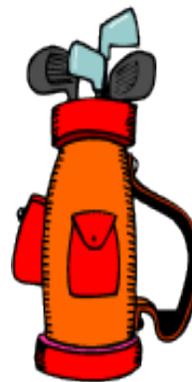


You dearly love the family member who is now living in a nursing home. More likely than not, the person is your parent. You have vivid and fond memories. The day will come when that is all you will have left – memories.

If your loved one still has a good long-term memory, consider making an audio/video recording of him/her telling stories about his/her life. An interview might be done by a grandchild. (Some grandchildren might be amazed that there was a time when you talked on the phone with a friend on the other side of town, and all of a sudden a neighbor was on the line with you. It was called a “party line.” It was not caused by a fluke in the satellite system powering your 4G network.) If your loved one is audio/video shy, a family member might conduct an interview and write a “book” about your loved one’s life. Share what is learned with all members of the family.

If your loved one has already passed away, you can do a number of things to keep the memories alive. Suggestions of activities for the family to do in a loved one’s honor/memory are listed below. If you are fortunate enough to still have your loved one with you, please take steps now to ensure a lasting memory (and include your loved one, if physically possible) by initiating some of the following suggestions or by coming up with ideas of your own. When your loss is final, it won’t take away the pain, but it might give you some comfort and joy.

If Mom enjoyed cooking, gather her favorite recipes, make a small family cookbook, and once a year (maybe on Mom’s birthday) gather for a meal of her recipes, including Mom at the dinner table while she is still here, and gathering annually to eat “her food” and remember her after she is gone.



If Dad was an avid golfer, hold an annual “Grandpa Open” for the family at a local miniature golf course (this could then involve grandchildren / great-grandchildren), maybe on Dad’s birthday and annually after he is gone.

If Mom liked to sing, have an annual karaoke night and sing Mom’s favorite songs.

If Dad loved the symphony, each year attend a concert as a family at which one of Dad’s favorite compositions is being performed.



If Dad loved baseball, gather the family to attend an annual pro/semi-pro game, or gather the family annually and play a softball game in his honor.

Volunteer to regularly mow the lawn of an elderly man in the neighborhood in honor and memory of Dad.

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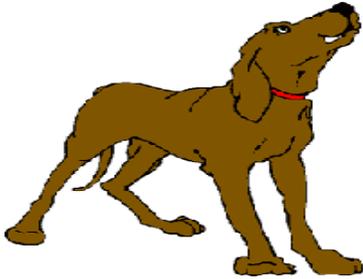
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Tools to Help Families Remember Their Loved One (Cont.)



If Mom was an **animal lover**, volunteer at an animal shelter in her honor.

If Mom's hobby was **board games/puzzles**, have an annual family game night in her honor.

If Dad was a **gardener**, each sibling might plant a garden at home in his honor, or volunteer at the city arboretum to care for a specific section of the park. You might even erect a statue of some kind in his honor.

If Dad enjoyed **bowling**, hold an annual family bowl-a-thon in his honor/memory.



If Dad was a **veteran** of the armed forces, gather together annually on Memorial Day for a celebration of his life and military career. If Dad was a religious man, the family might ask a local clergy member to lead a memorial service in Dad's memory.



Encourage **grandchildren/great grandchildren** to take up a **hobby** (painting, piano, pottery, sewing, gardening, violin, etc.) that was special to grandpa/grandma in his/her honor.

Raise funds to do **research to cure the disease** your loved one struggled with, i.e. diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc.

Create an **online tribute** for your loved one, especially at the time when his/her departure from life is imminent. For an example of a free web site, see caringbridge.org. Or family members can work together to create a blog page, and upload photos, videos, etc.

Finally, **come up with your own ideas** specifically suited for your loved one's honor/memory. Brainstorm with the family to find fun and beneficial activities that will involve all family members.

Keep the memory alive!

This article is one of a series included in a "Resource Manual for Bereavement in Long-Term Care" created, published, and copyrighted by *Senior PsychCare*. To receive the complete manual, call 713-850-0049, ext. 232.