



Tips for a Stimulating and Safe Cognitive Environment in Nursing Homes, Adult Day Programs and Assisted Living Centers

This month of February, let's pay attention to the safety, functionality, and pleasure in our environments.

Spring Cleaning in general:

1. Touch up paint in the halls and rooms; don't forget the showers and kitchens! Clean the floors and carpets. Make sure all flooring is safe.
2. Throw out clutter that is not being used in any area within viewing for the residents: old magazines, game pieces, unusable donations, unclaimed personal items.
3. Repair and rearrange tables or furniture for use in small groups.
4. Add additional lighting (lamps).
5. Add plants to the environment (dust, clean existing plants).

Interactive Stations

1. Create one new men's station – make sure interactive items are out and available. Interactive items should stimulate many senses – items that can be well seen, are interesting to touch and make noise when used.
2. Create one new multi-function station (maybe a desk for secretarial, teacher, nurse charting, realtor, etc.). Stimulate the senses appropriately!
3. Rearrange interactive stations for ease in traffic and functionality.

Spa Showers and Resident Bathrooms

1. Remove all items or furniture that would not be in a bathroom at home.
2. Ensure there is seating for residents to use when getting dressed.
3. Add homelike, colorful shower curtains on non-institutional rods.
4. Add a cabinet or shelf for homelike items (such as lotions and shampoo in pretty plastic bottles, colored towels, etc.).
5. Look into purchasing more pleasant looking shower chairs, thick soft robes for residents to use when going to/returning from the spa. Think sensory – does it look nice and neat and have color? Smell good? Feel soft, calm and warm?

Kitchen/Dining Room/Multi-purpose Room

1. Remove any clutter that would not be in a dining room normally at home.
2. Rearrange tables and chairs to make the room comfortable and inviting for all diners. Put out clean, soft, squishy pillows on the sofas.
3. Provide lighting additions (lamps, change to lighter curtains).
4. Make new center pieces. Something that can be touched and feels nice or something that smells really nice.
5. Use kitchen "smells" that stimulate hunger. Are you baking bread, cooking soup in a crock-pot, or microwaving bacon every day?

Courtyard

1. Remove any clutter and weeds that normally would not be on the patio or in a yard at home
2. Rearrange tables and chairs to make a social area – are there benches at 90-degree angles? Make sure they're clean, splinter free and sturdy.
3. Check the fence; is it on a magnetic keypad? If not, discuss this safety issue with your administrator.
4. Repair or prepare your standing gardening boxes. Think about starting some vegetables or flowers from seeds indoors that can later be transplanted outside. This is a great volunteer project for Boy Scouts or the Community Garden Club.
5. Make the area interactive. Do you have a mailbox? A broom? A retractable clothesline? Think of ways to stimulate the senses outdoors without overdoing it!

With a little extra thought, and a lot of "hands-on", you can have a really stimulating environment that is inviting to new residents, as well as your current residents.