



# Meaningful Activity After Stroke

**Meaningful activities can provide enjoyment, a sense of purpose and define who a person is.** These activities may include engagement in leisure, social, cultural and/or spiritual activities. After a stroke, impairments can make it challenging for a person to engage in meaningful activities. Supporting persons with stroke to participate can help with their recovery and build a sense of belonging.

## What you should know

- ✓ An individual is more likely to participate in an activity if it is meaningful/interesting to them
- ✓ Without meaningful experiences, days can feel long and empty, which can lead to social isolation, loneliness and depression
- ✓ Meaningful activities can contribute to improved recovery, including physical fitness, mood and overall well-being

### Engaging in meaningful experiences can provide opportunities for:

- socializing and meeting new people, leading to friendship and feeling they belong
- physical activity
- a sense of control over one's life
- a creative outlet
- stress relief
- a sense of accomplishment
- cultural experience
- improved self-confidence
- adjustment to a disability
- structuring a person's day
- enhanced quality of life



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## Smart Tips – Always follow the care plan!

### The Five W's and How



#### Ask questions to determine meaningful activities:

1. **Who** do you like to do activities with?
2. **What** do you like to do?
3. **Where** do you like to do these activities?
4. **When** do you like to do these activities?
5. **Why** do you like to do these activities?
6. **How** do you do these activities?

### How you can help



- Choose activities that are meaningful, enjoyable and important to the person; encourage participation
- Support the person with stroke to prepare for their activity – get any assistive devices ready (e.g. hearing aids, glasses, mobility device)
- Think of ways to modify the activity for successful participation (e.g. use card holders, encourage seated exercise, use large print bingo cards/playing cards)
- Find other individuals who have similar interests
- Use strategies to accommodate different levels of ability in communication, cognition, perception, vision, etc.
- Talk to family members, caregivers or friends about the person's interests
- Encourage family members, caregivers or friends to bring in some favourite items (e.g. music, books, games, word searches)
- Adjust food activities if the person with stroke has swallowing difficulties (i.e. dysphagia) to promote inclusion. Talk to a Registered Dietitian and/or Speech Language Pathologist if you have questions. (See Smart Tips for Stroke Care – Eating and Swallowing After Stroke)

## Seek extra support

- ✓ Occupational Therapists and Recreation Therapists are experts in supporting persons with stroke to engage in meaningful activities. It may be helpful to involve them in the person's care - especially if you notice the person is not participating or is becoming isolated