

Caregiver Tips: Hobbies for Seniors With Limited Mobility

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FROM DEL: When I first glanced at this, I thought it was more from specialists in this field. This is another question with answers from caregivers. There are good suggestions, but it is best to have a recommendation from a doctor or Physical Therapist on what is best for your loved one doing exercises. Dealing with Luann and her slow loss of muscle strength, I give her lots of credit for working to maintain her body by exercising and doing all she could for herself. She was in a wheelchair the last five years of her life. Before that she would use a small scooter to get around. Her first mode for movement was a three-wheel walker that had belonged to her mom. She started PT when she moved to Assisted Living but they pushed too hard and she hurt worse. I had to talk with them to remind them that she needs to maintain rather than improve. She had battled enough. It got to the point where she couldn't do much anymore. As caregivers, we need to encourage our loved ones to keep fighting and working to at least maintain. **HOWEVER**, you need to have that discussion on how much pushing and encourage is too much. You must be able to recognize when your encouragement must be replaced by support and understanding, especially if they have battled for a long time. Be thankful that your loved one has fought the brave fight, and lived beyond expectations. Celebrate with them.

Age-related changes in mobility can significantly impact an elder's quality of life. Mobility issues create an increasing number of challenges for family members who are looking for things to do when visiting or caring for an aging loved one. The [Caregiver Forum](#) is filled with caregivers coming together to share valuable information, so we've compiled experienced caregivers' best tips and suggestions for activities that seniors with limited mobility can enjoy.

Activities for Seniors With Limited Mobility

"Try a trip to the library, either for books or for a book club or garden club that meets there. There might also be a program for them to read to kids. Where I live, anyone can sign up to come read a small book to kids ages 4-8 in the summer reading program. Try a trip to a local museum, a park with pretty flowers to look at for a bit, or a duck pond to watch the ducks. If their mobility is so limited that they can't do any of that, I'd suggest looking into a scooter or other mobility aid. They may resist the idea, but once they try one and see how much it helps, they'll probably love it!" – TardisTT40

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“Of course you don’t want your loved one doing things around the house when their balance is bad and they may topple over at any minute. And using non-stationary objects (like a table) to brace oneself is a no-no. If they are determined to help around the house, you might have to think outside the box to come up with some things that they can do while using their walker/rollator to brace themselves. How about setting the table for dinner? Get some oranges from the store and have them make fresh-squeezed orange juice? They can do this sitting at the table. Peeling carrots for dinner? My dad had a very difficult time getting around safely, but he still needed to feel useful. He wasn’t really into the whole homemaker thing, so I would ask his advice and opinion on things. Parenting tips. Current events. Little issues that come up in everyday life, like car questions or job-related questions. He really enjoyed sharing his experiences with me.” –Eyerishlass

“Is there a senior center nearby? They usually have activities like chair yoga, music classes, outings and the like.” –Babalou

“Please don’t assume that because your loved one can’t walk, they’re immobile. They can and should use a wheelchair or some type of mobility aid to get around and get outside. My mom went through this transition in the past year due to bad knees and it’s hard. She goes slow, but she still gets around under her own power. It’s a small bit of independence, but it helps keep her as active as possible and she feels good knowing that she can get around. If possible, try a walker with a seat or basket for your loved one. Before the wheelchair, Mom used this to transport stuff around the house and it seemed to help keep her ‘working’ longer. She moved towels from the laundry to the bathrooms, dirty dishes from the dining room to the kitchen, etc. It might seem minor, but it helped her feel like she could still make some contribution by using it as a ‘trolley’ or ‘cart’ to haul things around.” –LynnPO

“My mother is 92 and has difficulty getting around. She does try to walk each day because her doctor told her, ‘If you don’t walk, you won’t walk.’ So, I suggest walking with your loved one. Use a walker if necessary. Short distances are perfectly fine. Just try to keep them moving. You can also do arm chair exercises.” –EmilyM

“If your loved one is able, drying dishes and dusting is great for shaky hands. My husband has had Parkinson’s disease (PD) for 10 years, and I have him do these things and fold small articles of clothing, like socks. It also gets his mind working when he has to match them to make pairs.” –marylou1957

“If they cannot get out, try getting a fish tank or bird feeder and a bird book for your loved one to do bird watching from a porch or inside through a window.” –lindy20

“The right equipment helps. The best thing I ever bought for my parents was a companion chair (wheelchair). It can be folded up and kept in the trunk of my car (which I do all of the time). It has helped me be able to take my parents to malls, parks, restaurants, and museums, etc.” –blannie

“Limited mobility that results from a fall, fracture or surgery can be especially difficult. Medical professionals have told me that hip fractures result in a different level of healing and a high possibility of complications because of the immobility caused by the type of fracture (i.e., no longer being able to walk as freely as before). It’s a new mindset. In some ways, it’s like cessation of driving—the mobility and freedom once enjoyed are no longer there. It’s a new and unwelcome dimension of aging. So compensate by trying to create mobility for your loved one. You can compensate by driving your loved one (getting them out of the house for a change of pace), accommodating their limitations and finding the right mobility aid. If you can help recreate their mobility, that’s a good step forward, but do it slowly and safely.” –GardenArtist

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“My mom has a large outdoor motorized scooter, and that’s what makes her feel independent and gives her freedom. She’s 93 and has had one lower leg amputated. In the house, she is mostly in her wheelchair, but the scooter allows her to visit friends, go to her book club at the library and visit her favorite spots. For her, it is a godsend.” –midrashist

“My dad was an avid fisherman. When he was still relatively mobile but dependent on a motorized scooter, we all chipped in and rented a pontoon boat for the day. We took Dad out fishing, rode around the lake, and everyone brought homemade food to share. It was a really nice day. The staff at the rental company lifted Dad’s scooter onboard and held the boat steady so he could transfer from the dock to the boat. He rode on the boat while seated on his scooter. He just loved it. This boat had it all—shade, luxurious seating, even a port-a-potty in a small enclosure for privacy.” – SusanA43

“Think about what the person enjoyed or prior work experiences to tap into simple tasks similar to hobbies and interests. Gardeners might enjoy picking dried flowers off plants. Engineer types may enjoy anything that has mechanical parts. Cooks would enjoy helping with meals: washing veggies, assembling a salad, mixing ingredients. People who did organization or detail-oriented jobs can help fold laundry, sweep floors, or sort items.” –Taarna

“Put on some music and practice ‘dancing’! This can be as simple as rhythmic steps and kicking while on seated, or can involve getting up and down and actual steps while holding onto a mobility aid. There are some cute videos of older women dancing with their walkers that will give you ideas. Dancing is really great because it is more fun than simple exercise, less boring, and encourages retention of balance and coordination.” –DrBenshir

“Walking is great exercise. Walk on level ground or in the house first to build up some strength and experience. After that, increase distance and add a variety of scenes. Before my knee replacements, I used walkers extensively because I needed to stop and let the knots in my knees loosen up again. The walker gave me a place to sit wherever I needed one. I used to pick up my Mom and take her to the city rose gardens with paved paths. The two of us would tour the gardens with our walkers, stopping to look at and smell the flowers. We usually spent about an hour in the park, though I really couldn’t say how much of that was walking and how much was sitting. We had a good time and we probably covered about a mile of walking while having fun in the gardens. Walking the mall can also be an interesting outing that makes the walking (and exercise) seem like a side issue, with the main event seeing what the stores have.” –LittleOrchid

“Finding the right mobility aids and learning to use them properly can expand a senior’s options for activities and hobbies and improve safety. My family members did occupational therapy (OT) and physical therapy (PT) after they started using their walkers. They learned how to sit down and get up as well as how to get into the car. Ask your loved one’s doctor to order her PT evaluation. I did this when my aunt went from using a cane to using a walker. I wanted to make sure she was utilizing the walker correctly.” –97yroidmom2

“I can’t tell you how many jigsaw puzzles me and mom have done. It is great time together since both of us enjoy doing them. There are so many different levels. Mom used to do 1,000-piece puzzles and now we do 300-piece ones together. We sometimes start one at 7 p.m. and finish around 11 p.m.! A great feeling of accomplishment before we BOTH go to bed.” –foxxmolder

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