

Social Security Disability and Medicaid Law Newsletter



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A FREE LEGAL UPDATE FOR ELDERLY AND OTHERS WHO SEEK ASSET PROTECTION ♦ JANUARY, 2016 EDITION

HOW ART BENEFITS SENIORS AFFECTED BY DEMENTIA

Creating and appreciating art can be of the most fulfilling parts of the human experience. Practicing the arts has been proven to be particularly valuable for the elderly, who may find art to be a therapeutic and meaningful part of their lives.

Art offers the opportunity to earn a sense of pride in sharing your talents with others, to engage with your community, and to help keep the brain working well.

These advantages are particularly noteworthy for patients of serious degenerative diseases, but there isn't a person who does not stand to gain from the arts.

Art Therapy

Researchers have found that art therapy can be nourishing both physiologically and psychologically. Not only can it help improve physical cognition, it can have a strong beneficial effect on a someone's sense of well-being.

Art therapy for seniors is particularly valuable for those who suffer from degenerative diseases, like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Neurological research has found that creating art can help improve cognitive functions by creating new, stronger neural pathways, and by engaging the attention of the patient.

Art Therapy for Seniors with Dementia

Of the many types of therapy available to patients of dementia, art therapy is a particularly effective aid for treating dementia because the creation and appreciation of art involves both hemispheres of the brain.

The processes involved in working with art produce a physical change in our brain, which can help our brains compensate with degenerative disease.

Socialization

By its very nature, art is a social activity. It is created not just for the sake of creating, but to offer a creative outlet for expression and communication. It's worth remembering that there is an intrinsic value to being involved in a

community and being able to express yourself, which can greatly increase your sense of well-being.

Sometimes, older adults have untapped artistic talents that they aren't using, or may be unaware of. It's not unheard of for world-renowned artists to develop their talents only in the later stages of their lives.

Grandma Moses began painting at age 78. During the final two decades of her life, she went on to produce some of the most famous folk paintings in American history.

Beyond fine art, there are seniors who are involved with creating street art and graffiti art. Portugal's Lata 65 and Germany's Senior Street Art programs give older adults between the ages of 50 and 85 the opportunity to work with talented graffiti artists, breaking out cans of spray paint to create works of art on public surfaces.

As an opportunity to socialize, exposure to the arts has also been used successfully to help alleviate depression. Depression is extremely common among seniors, and is increasingly common for people who suffer from chronic disease.

According to Dr. Gene Cohen, a leading researcher on aging at George Washington University, art therapy benefits include the ability to facilitate relaxation, reduce anxiety, reduce depression, provide needed socialization, promote cognitive improvement, improve self-esteem, and alleviate boredom.

Making art can be rewarding and fun. It can reduce stress, pain, and offer a sense of empowerment in the face of chronic illness. It's as beneficial for both the people who create as it is for the people who experience it.

Even if your loved one doesn't end up being the next Grandma Moses, every person has the ability to benefit from exposure to the arts. And with so many programs across the United States that offer art classes to seniors, getting involved in the arts is much easier than you would think.

How to Act Around Someone With Alzheimer's

If you want to meaningfully connect with your loved one who suffers from memory impairment,

you have to set the mood. Here are tips:

Avoid distractions – Create a comfortable ambiance that doesn't have a lot of stimuli so that your loved one can focus all their mental energy on the conversation.

Use a warm tone and calm voice – Don't be condescending and don't use heightened emotion. Speak clearly using a calm manner.

Use names – Avoid pronouns and refer to people by their names. Be sure to greet your loved one with their name.

Use nonverbal cues – Maintain eye contact and smile. Having a warm, inviting demeanor will help but your loved one at ease and normal, comfortable body language can help your loved one recognize that you are someone familiar, even if they don't recognize or remember exactly who you are.

Be a good listener – Nod your head and interact with your loved one's conversation. If you don't understand something, politely ask open-ended questions.

Don't criticize – Try not to correct your loved one if they are in accurate. Be compassionate. Feel free to go along with their delusions and misstatements to see where the conversation takes you.

News You Can Use

2016 FLORIDA MEDICAID LIMITS

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| Gross Monthly Income Limit for Medicaid Applicant: | \$2,199.00 |
| Personal Needs Allowance: | \$105.00 |
| Asset Limit (Individual): | \$2,000.00 |
| Asset Limit (Couple): | \$3,000.00 |
| Community Spouse Resource Allowance: | \$119,220.00 |
| Minimum Monthly Maintenance Income Allowance: | \$1,966.25 |
| Maximum Monthly Maintenance Income Allowance: | \$2,980.50 |