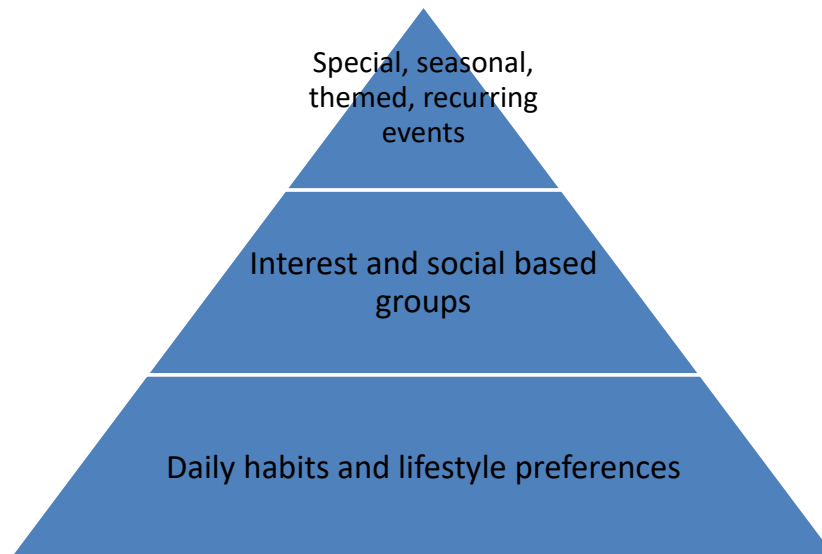


3 Dimensions of Life Enrichment



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“The ordinary arts are much more important to the soul than their simplicity might suggest.”

This quote by Thomas Moore is important to consider as meaningful activities are planned and implemented for the elders living in care communities.

1. The tip of the triangle represents the first dimension of an enriched life. The planning and scheduling of events and the construction of a monthly calendar is a major focus of professionals delivering life enrichment services. Special events, including holidays and themed activities, are important to “build community” between residents, families and staff. They provide the feeling of anticipation, they promote continuity of traditional life celebrations. They provide an opportunity for escape from daily routines and diversity that is vital to life. Yet, quality of life is not defined just by the large events in our lives. Vacations, weddings, religious celebrations and themed parties are special, but “simple daily pleasures” are also imperative for the soul.

2. The middle section of the triangle represents the second dimension of an enriched life. Sharing in small groups with people with similar interests creates bonds and feelings of belongingness.

- *Through social interaction we learn of ourselves...groups and social interaction are the major source of information to help develop a concept of “self.”*
- *One of the skills basic to adequate functioning is the ability to get along in a group. Failure to belong or be accepted often leads to inadequate functioning.*
- *Social engagement increases the ability to cope, to be resilient. It stimulates activity across the brain and promotes a positive sense of well-being. Social engagement typically takes place in groups having between 3-10 members. For those with cognitive impairments, the size may be 3-5.*
- *A cohesive group promotes:*
 - Feelings of togetherness*
 - A liking for each other*
 - Security and trust*
 - Self-worth and esteem*
 - A sense of belonging*
 - Acceptance*
 - Support*

3. The bottom tier of the triangle represents the third dimension of an enriched life, it is the foundation. *The daily habits, routines and lifestyle preferences that give us a sense of security, define our identity and give us moments of pleasure. These are our “ordinary arts” that enrich the soul and enhance quality of life. ..A cup of coffee or tea, just the way we like it, listening to a favorite song, sitting in the sun, listening to the rain, eating chocolate, talking with a friend, reading the newspaper, a beautiful sunset, watering a plant, a favorite hobby, a spiritual ritual. It is the daily interactions, spontaneous conversations, reminiscing and sharing of ideas of “things” that are meaningful.*

- *High self-esteem in newly admitted residents is related to high frequency of social interaction. (Anderson) Life review helps to promote positive outcomes. (Haight)*
- *“The opportunity to do THINGS we find meaningful is ESSENTIAL to human health.”
Dr. Bill Thomas*
- *“A lack of attention to lifestyle preferences or a lack of opportunity to engage in meaningful and enjoyable activities can result in boredom, depressed mood, behavioral disturbances” RAI Manual*
- *“Activities are meaningful when they reflect a person’s lifestyles and interests” RAI*

How will you provide an enriched life to the people that you serve in care communities? How will you facilitate engagement in meaningful pursuits beyond “the calendar?”

