

Social Adult Day Programs and Persons who are Isolated

Social adult day programs provide individuals who are isolated with stimulating activities which encourage independence and decision-making. These valuable programs assist individuals to maintain the social aspect of life that is vital to the feeling of self-worth along with helping them maintain self-respect and productivity in a positive, caring environment beyond the family. Compared to a senior center, these programs are smaller and more structured.

Individuals who physically are still fairly independent are those who are most appropriate for social day programs. Seniors need to be involved in activities that will continue to stimulate their abilities and allow for feelings of accomplishment. Under the direction of staff sensitive to the needs and limitations of program participants, new experiences are pleasurable, safe and satisfying. Most important of all, during the day, the person is busy, independent, active and involved. By staying connected with others in a positive environment, a healthy lifestyle can be maintained.

Family also benefits. Many individuals return home tired, less frustrated and with feelings of contentment. Family members have had time to themselves as have the senior. Another very important aspect of social day programs is that these programs often serve as a viable transition to a more structured living accommodation. The person has experienced time away from the family and the need to adjust to another environment, other people, schedules and routines. More importantly, a more structured living accommodation may be prevented or delayed for months or years because the family gets the respite and the person gets the stimulation and support to maintain independence longer.

The earlier the senior becomes a participant at the social adult day program, the greater the physical and mental benefits. Family should seek relief options early in their caregiver role and never wait until they become frustrated and tired. All family members need to be realistic as to their roles and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Adult day programs play an important role in providing greater quality of life for both the older person and the family. It is not a panacea, but is an option of value and worth from which family and senior alike can greatly benefit.