

A MEANINGFUL DAY

We often get caught up in the simple idea that a busy day is a meaningful day, and that the more activities an individual is involved in, the more fulfilling their life must be. However, there is a big difference between a life that is filled with "busy work" and a life that is truly meaningful.

Rather than thinking in terms of "activities", think of what our loved ones are doing each day in terms of the particular roles they have within these activities. Keep in mind that just "being there" does not guarantee a role.

A danger for individuals with disabilities is that they may spend their days "coasting" or "floating". Not only do we owe them the dignity of risk, but we also owe them the dignity of experience, and the chance to not spend their days simply killing time.

Often individuals and their families struggle with knowing what is meaningful. For many individuals, it is difficult to know what they find interesting or meaningful without having previous experiences to draw from. Many families commit to spending a certain amount of time trying new things. Some families have brainstormed a list of experiences that might be typically appropriate for individuals of the same age as their loved one, and these are tried, one by one. Once an individual has tried each of these experiences, they have the knowledge to decide what is of interest or "meaningful" to them and what is not.

Again, filling up an individual's week with activities, if not done carefully, may not result in meaningful days; instead, it could just end up being a time filler. Working on finding employment, helping the individual expand their knowledge, or having them take part in activities that are in line with their life plan or are simply enjoyable to them **is** meaningful. Having VALUED ROLES is meaningful. Instead of looking at what is available and drawing from that, start with what is meaningful to that person and go out and find the resources to suit their needs.

