

How to Get Someone to Attend Adult Daycare

Senior day centers are under-used resources in our community. These small centers offer activities and care to those with mild to moderate symptoms. The cost is usually modest, compared with in-home care. But caregivers may find it hard to get their family members to attend. Here are some tips:

- Convince yourself first. Call for a tour, to see what might interest your family member and to discuss any obstacles you anticipate (e.g., There are too many "old" people). Staff are expert at inducing reluctant people to attend, and in managing newcomer anxiety.
- Give a convincing reason. Some people attend because they see the center as their "Club" or as "class." Some go for a particular activity, or to be with a new friend. Some attend to help others, as a volunteer would.
- Ask the doctor and others to back you up.
- Look for a hook. Schedule your family member's visit when there is an activity (e.g., music, crafts, exercise, or discussion) that they might enjoy and try out on the spot.
- Take one step at a time. The objective of the first, short visit is simply to have the person agree to return for a day. Don't push too hard; use a try-it-and-see approach.
- Be firm. Initially, the person may enjoy going, but complain to you of being unhappy. Don't argue. Next day just assume that you will return. Try saying, "They are expecting you today," or "I want you to go for a little while," or "Let's talk about that later."
- Get the right person to take him or her, at least the first few times. Choose someone who can usually get your family member to do things.
- Start with a few, short days. Two visits a week is a minimum for someone with memory loss. Short days are less taxing for newcomers. When the routine becomes comfortable, you can add days. It usually takes a new person weeks to adjust.
- Reinforce the positive. Support any positive experiences that your family member has or that you or staff noticed. Try again later. Sometimes a person frets so much that it becomes counterproductive. Some find that trying again after a few months' break is more successful.