

» *Prized moments with our Abuelos & Elders*

# Embrace the time you have



Porfiria Riojas, a ninety-one-year-old grandmother, and her great-granddaughter enjoy an afternoon birdwatching at Hugh Ramsey Nature Park in Harlingen. Research shows there are many benefits of spending time outdoors for elders. Not only does it boost vitamin D, it also improves mental wellbeing and physical health, and boosts the immune system.

The Valley Catholic

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During several months in 2022, the Holy Father has been sharing catechesis on the elderly.

In one of his talks, he said there is a “void of thought, imagination and creativity,” regarding establishing not just care plans for the elderly but also plans to live life to the full.

Recognizing the gift of our elders, it behooves us to look for creative ways to spend time with them. They link generations, impart family history, teach us about our cultural heritage; they are living treasures in our midst.

To serve as a starting point, below are some ideas that may help make each encounter with our elders, be they our aging parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, or

neighbors, one that contributes to their living life to the full. Proceed with an understanding that some people require a gentle nudging to engage in some of these activities. Also, health and mobility limitations may rule out a few of the suggestions.

Don’t let distance be a deterrent from scheduling time. Some of these activities could be done virtually.

### Share your ideas

Share some of your treasured moments and any other ideas you think we should add to the lists below.

Take a photo and share it on social media with the hashtags #grandparenttime #RGVAbuelos #RGVGrandparents #RGVElders

### Ask Yourself ...

- Who are the elders in your life you would like to spend more time with?
- How often to you spend time with your grandparent or elder?
- What was the last activity that you did together?
- What is one of your most memorable moments with your grandparent?

## ■ Mass & Prayer Time

Pope Francis said prayer is a specific mission of the elderly. “Your prayer is a very precious resource: a deep breath that the Church and the world urgently need (cf. Evangelii Gaudium, 262) ... your intercession for the world and for the Church has great value: it inspires in everyone the serene trust that we will soon come to shore.”

### Mass

Go to Mass together.

### Ask for Prayers

As prayer warriors, our elders appreciate being asked to pray for special intentions we may have. One grandmother places photos of her children and grandchildren on her home altar as a reminder.

### Rosary

Pray the Rosary together. (In person, virtually or on the phone.)

### Prayer Cards

Start a collection of prayer cards you can share with each other and talk about your favorite saints and devotions.

## ■ Memory Lane

### Teatime Questions / Conversation Starters

Write out some questions you would like to ask on index cards and pick one out at random as you sit down for some tea, coffee or milk and cookies. (See link for starter questions.)

### Music

Create a playlist of your loved one’s favorite songs.

### Recipe Sharing

Is there a recipe that has been handed down from previous generations? Why is it a favorite?

### Pull out the photos

Look through photos together. Let them serve as an opportunity for sharing stories.

## ■ Outdoors/Fieldtrips

- A hike/walk outdoors to a local park
- Short drive and ice-cream treat
- Close to home exploring
  - o Museum
  - o Visit to the Zoo
  - o Pilgrimage to the Cathedral or Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle-National Shrine
- Volunteer together
  - o Make sandwiches or gift bags for the homeless
  - o Adopt an elderly neighbor
- Bird watching
- Picnic
- Photography Walk

## ■ Arts & Handcrafts/ Indoor Projects

Find something that interests your loved one.

- Coloring, Painting
- Card making, writing notes to loved ones
- Create a scrapbook together
- Jewelry Making

### Comedy Night

Make them laugh/ Share some jokes

### Family Tree

Research your family genealogy together

### Kitchen Moments

Cook a favorite recipe together.

### Theatre Night

- o Watch a movie together
- o Act out a favorite scene

### Liturgical Seasons

Find crafts related to the liturgical seasons. For example, during Advent you could make and Advent calendar.

## ■ Physical/Mental Fitness

### Games

Loteria / Bingo, Scrabble, Blokus, Mahjong, Yahtzee, Bananagrams, Checkers, Card games

### Fitness Minutes

- o Chair Yoga, Sitting stretches
- o Balloon volleyball
- o Beanbag Throw
- o Online class

(Proyecto Juan Diego in Brownsville offers classes that are available in person and on-line. <https://www.proyecto-jd.org/health-services>)

### Dancing

Set up some space at home to dance or sign up for a class together.

Research shows that dancing is not only good exercise it is also good for the brain. One study found that dancing reduces the risk of dementia by 76 percent.