



Daniel Haimowitz, MD, FACP, CMD, is medical director of the Geriatric Assessment Program at St. Mary Medical Center in Langhorne, PA, and is a member of the Assisted Living Consult Editorial Advisory Board. Dr. Haimowitz recently sent an E-mail to colleagues and friends with the subject line: "Question you're probably not often asked." We thought the question was a great one and asked Dr. Haimowitz if we could share some of the replies.

E-mail from Dan Haimowitz:



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I just received an invitation to one of my patient's 100th birthday party! The invitation says not to bring presents, but I would like to give her something, so my question for you...what does one get for a 100 year old?

Responses:

If the patient is a woman, take the high road and just bring flowers. If the patient is a gentleman, an interesting small bottle of wine—like an ice wine.

My personal response would be "it depends." Just like how I would medically treat an individual—age is just one factor in making the determination of what is in the best interest of this person. With that said, I would probably lean more toward giving an experience rather than a thing—an experience that would fit this individual's personality—perhaps a day at the salon, dinner out or brought in, etc.

I just celebrated a friend's 100th birthday, and I bought her a wrist corsage made of roses and baby's breath.

We just had a similar activity. There were flowers, a contribution in the person's honor, a favorite treat (soft, dark chocolate), and music (a CD). Or, bring a camera, take some photographs, and then put together a small album.

How about a plant or flowers?

My suggestion would be something consumable such as chocolates, nice wine, or body lotion, but ask the caregiver what she enjoys and give that!

Your time, attention, and attendance are sufficient. At 100 years of age, it is not things, but positive moments, friends, and loved ones that truly count. No present necessary.

The Inquirer (Philadelphia) can give you a copy of the

paper on the day the person was born. A lot of residents (and friends) have enjoyed those.

A copy of headline news from the newspaper in the town or city where she was born.

I would go for immediate consumables along the vice line—a cigar/cigarette, a fine cognac, and cheesecake—if a man, maybe a stripper, but that could really throw him over the edge.

A donation to her favorite charity?

You!

Perhaps a coin dated the year the person was born.

Donate something of significance in her background and provide a visual aide of the donation as the gift (eg, if she was raised on a farm, donate a goat or flock of chickens in her name to Heifer Project International and give the certificate and a Beanie Baby goat or chicken).

If she was a teacher or librarian, donate to a literacy program or go to a used book store and get an "old" book.

A secretary? Donate to the Dress for Success program.

A homemaker or stay-at-home Mom? March of Dimes.

Also a framed stamp is easy to find online for whatever theme you like (eg, the year she was born, a commemorative nurse stamp, victory over polio stamp, or one of the American flag variations if she was born on or near a patriotic date).

I could go on and on! It comes from having to give many gifts through the years on a very fixed budget.

If she's Jewish, plant a tree in Israel!

A lot of my patients like the "breathing puppy." It's a little puppy that looks like it is breathing. They also enjoy these lights that look like an aquarium, and they can watch the fish or butterflies or whatever other theme they have. My grandmother has one.

Have you contacted Willard Scott to present a jar of Smuckers Jam with your patient's picture on it?

I spoke to my resident who will be 106 in August. She said definitely not flowers, fruit may be nice, and if she can still read, she may greatly enjoy reading books about the time from when she was a child.

Dr. Haimowitz gave his resident a proclamation from a state congressman. She was thrilled. ALC

If you wish to respond to Dr. Haimowitz or any of the comments here, please send an e-mail to experts@AssistedLivingConsult.com.