

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

Meaningful activity when employment is not realistic

Not everyone can hold a competitive job. That does not mean the day has to be television. Contribution, mastery, and connection are the three pillars behind every purposeful week. Here is how to design one and repeat it.

BY JIM PALASTY · 12 MIN READ · ADULT LIFE

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PILLARS OF PURPOSE

Contribution. Mastery. Connection. The three needs behind every meaningful day. Employment is one path. There are others.

How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

Name the goal



STEP 2

Design the week



STEP 3

Fund it and staff it

Categories of meaningful activity

Volunteering	Food bank, animal shelter, faith community, garden.
Micro-enterprise	Small paid work, family-run, low-volume.
Learning-based	Adult ed, hobby class, music, art, cooking.
Physical activity	Walking group, adaptive sports, dance, yoga.
Community	Recreation programs, faith community, neighbors.
Household contribution	Cooking, cleaning, laundry, care of pets.
Creative production	Making things others use, buy, or enjoy.
Rest and quiet	Deliberate downtime. Not screens by default.

A STORY WE KNOW

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Terrance is 34 and a graduate of an adult day program that closed. His mother spent three months trying to find another program. She stopped trying and instead built his week: Monday and Wednesday he sorts donations at the food bank, Tuesday he takes an adult ceramics class at the community center, Thursday he mows lawns with his uncle’s landscaping crew, Friday he swims. Saturday he visits his grandfather. Sunday is his. Two years later he is happier than he was in the day program. His mother is not less tired. But he is happier.

A DAY IS CONTRIBUTION, MASTERY, CONNECTION

What matters, at a glance

Contribution

He helps somebody. The food bank. The garden. A neighbor. His grandmother. Meaning is made in the giving.

Mastery

He is getting better at something. Practicing. Iterating. Not just filling time. Skill is dignity.

The bored adult

An adult with no purpose watches TV twelve hours a day and slowly loses skills he already had. Boredom is a medical event. Treat it like one.

Connection

Two people who know his name and his story. Not staff. Not family. Two others. This is often the missing pillar.

Structure

Six days a week of structure. Sundays open. Not seven. Not five. Six blocks of purpose that repeat.

Micro-enterprise

Etsy, sandwich stand, dog walking, farmers market, mail sorting. The right micro-enterprise pays a little and matters a lot.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

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| ☐ One contribution site he attends weekly | ☐ One mastery track he is progressing in |
| ☐ Two community members who know his name | ☐ Physical activity three times a week |
| ☐ Household contribution he owns | ☐ Rest time that is not screens |
| ☐ Weekly ritual with family | ☐ Quarterly review with him at the table |

YOUR MOVE

When you are designing his week from scratch, here is how you do it

- 1 List everyone he already knows in the community. Family, faith community, neighbors, former teachers.
- 2 Draft the ideal Wednesday on one page. Contribution, mastery, connection, rest.
- 3 Test one contribution site (food bank, garden, animal shelter) this month.
- 4 Add one mastery track (class, lesson, apprentice) next month.
- 5 Add two named community connections. Faces he sees weekly.
- 6 Review the week at ninety days. Adjust what did not fit. Keep what did.

The measure of a good week is not hours filled. It is whether he woke up wanting Wednesday.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

lifecoursetools.com · <https://www.lifecoursetools.com/>
bestbuddies.org · <https://www.bestbuddies.org/>

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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