

## **DEALING WITH DECLINING ABILITIES**

(Dottie Welch, September 2005)

Provide hearing enhancement equipment if needed.

Shorten the length of tips. When using a singing call, aim for once through the patten record and bring the dancers to home right at its end.

Watch your dancers for signs of fatigue and react as needed. Make it possible for dancers to switch out if they can't complete a whole tip.

Be prepared with shorter singing call figures in case the dancers can not complete the moves in the time shown on the timing charts.

Dancers will understand if the caller occasionally sacrifices wind-in-the-face dancing for the needs of old friends who are slowing down.

Consider ending dance events a bit earlier in the evening if attendance is dropping off after 10 pm.

When dancers indicate that it is time for them to reduce the complexity of their dancing, respect their decision and encourage them to continue dancing in a less complex program.

Encourage someone in the area to provide square dancing for seniors:

- Daytime event is best so that night driving is not a problem.

- Plan choreography geared to their abilities, not to any particular program.

- Adjust singing calls to accept and accommodate slower reactions.

If the group is small and one member is experiencing difficulties, try to adjust your choreography to accommodate and/or compensate.

- Give them time to rest by activating the other sex.

- Add some extra clues to stimulate the memory.

- Avoid using a move from a troublesome position.

When faced with sudden changes in a dancer's abilities, first make sure that the family is aware of the problem, then deal with it as well as possible, and keep in mind that the situation probably will not last very long.

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Here's an example of an extreme adjustment:

A competent dancer of many years began having difficulty dancing Motivate because he was not turning the centre star half way. After several unsuccessful attempts to correct the error, I stopped calling Motivate when he was in the position that was causing trouble. Within a few months his health had declined so much that he could no longer dance. Meanwhile we kept him dancing with us as long as possible.