



HOLIDAY HELPER

TIPS & TRICKS TO HELP YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA HAVE A JOYOUS & PEACEFUL HOLIDAY SEASON

The Holiday season can present challenges for folks living with dementia and their families. Here is a collection of a few tips we have compiled that may help.



1. **Emotional awareness is key:** Understand that the holiday season is very emotionally charged. For the person living with dementia, emotional meaning is very important. Take a minute to think back about past holiday celebrations: recall what connected your loved one to positive emotions, and what may have brought about a negative emotion. Avoid anything that may have caused negative emotion in the past and focus on aspects that brought your loved one the most joy during the season.
2. **Take a moment to do an inventory of your expectations** of your loved one, be realistic. If the ultimate goal is peace, comfort and joy you need to have a good handle on what your loved one can tolerate, what their attention span is, what their triggers are, and what soothes/relaxes them. Remember, their presence is a gift, taking a few moments to prepare for a successful season of celebrations is important. Be prepared to go along with them if they decide not to join or participate in celebrations or gatherings, despite best efforts, we all know this is a reality. Don't make your loved one feel guilty or that you are disappointed that they could not attend/participate as usual, assure them it is okay, validate feelings, and love them through it.
3. **Avoid/limit exposure to stress:** along with the joy of the holiday season comes added stress. Try to protect your loved one from exposure to the stress YOU may be experiencing during the holiday season, chances are it will only agitate them, or cause them to worry about you!
4. **Avoid crowded and Noisy places:** grocery stores and retail stores get super busy during the holiday season, if it all possible, avoid these places with your loved one living with dementia as it can further frustrate or confuse them. If they live in a facility of any kind, there may be times that things get too overstimulating for them, understand a quieter setting may be better, comfort is a good goal!
5. **Keep Traditions:** though your loved one living with dementia may not be able to articulate their past family traditions, adhering to them and keeping them alive can be a source of familiarity that can breed comfort, spark memories and increase engagement.
6. **Help your loved one feel useful during celebration preparation:** Find ways they can be helpful and useful, be creative! If they feel they are a burden or not able to participate in preparations, it can lead to frustration, anger, and feelings of uselessness-even withdrawal.
7. **Spread the love/stagger holiday visits/celebrations/prepare others:** Don't expect your loved one to be able to keep up the pace you may have, visiting multiple homes and relatives in one day. Spread visits out wherever possible. As families grow, your loved one living with dementia is going to have difficulty remembering who everyone is. Take a moment when you can to educate family members not to quiz your loved one, to just enjoy their presence! It's not the remembering of names that is important; it's the creation of positive emotions. You may also want to gently remind family members that more frequent visits during the year may be helpful-spreading the love through the year!

From our home to yours, HAPPY EVERYTHING! Judy Fowler ADC/MC, CDP