



WILLIAMSBURG LANDING®

## Reduce Stress and Increase Your Joy with These Dementia Caregiving Tips for the Holidays

For the many caregivers and families of loved ones with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia, the holidays can be very stressful and sometimes even overwhelming. However, by following these expert tips, you can help keep your holidays merry and bright.

- **Be Realistic and Practical** – You can only do so much! Set realistic expectations for yourself and your loved one. Avoid taking on too many tasks and consider scaling down your traditions (e.g. limiting travel and reducing your number of guests).
- **Keep Things Calm** – Loved ones with dementia can feel overwhelmed or irritated with the changes in their normal routine and the increased levels of noise, people and overall stimulation. Try to limit your number of guests and visitors at any one time. If your loved one is in the earlier stages of the disease, keep in mind they may also have anxiety about others noticing their impairment.
- **Be Open and Honest** – Let family and friends know about your loved one's condition and your concerns. Prepare them for what to expect and how best to communicate with your loved one. Let them know that their patience and understanding is important and much appreciated.
- **Prepare Your Loved One Early** – Prepare your loved one for holiday visitors ahead of time. Provide a private "sanctuary" that your loved one can retreat to when things get too hectic. Avoid giving them alcohol as it can cause depression.
- **Limit Your Decorations** – Over decorating and using bright blinking lights can cause overstimulation. Avoid lighted candles and other safety hazards as well as decorations that could be mistaken for edible treats such as artificial fruits. Also, do not rearrange your furniture as this causes confusion.
- **Involve Your Loved One to the Extent They Are Able** – You can still share the joy of the holidays with your loved one and enjoy the season in many ways. Take a ride to see holiday decorations, sing or listen to holiday music, read cards, bake cookies or hang ornaments together.
- **Give Safe, Useable Gifts** – Your loved one will enjoy gifts such as photo albums of family and friends, stuffed animals or soft pillows, favorite music, videos and movies and simple games.
- **When Visiting or Traveling** – When visiting friends and family, take a favorite "comfort item" with you and prepare the hosts for your loved one's special needs, including a quiet area away from the crowd and noise. If you're traveling long distances, be sure to plan ahead for all possible eventualities.
- **Ask for Help and Support** – Frequently, friends and relatives want to help, but don't know how. Ask them for *specific* assistance during the holidays (e.g. pick up mom's prescriptions on Tuesday).

Also, a gift certificate for respite care can afford your loved one a welcomed change of scenery while providing you with some valuable time off from your caregiving responsibilities to relax, recharge your batteries or go out with friends.



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