



# DEMENTIA FRIENDLY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Below are some tips to make the holidays more enjoyable for people living with dementia, their families, and care partners. Simplifying celebrations, planning, and setting boundaries can help you minimize stress and create a pleasant holiday experience for you and the person living with dementia.

## Create a safe and calm space

- **Tone down decorations.** Avoid blinking lights or large decorative displays that may cause confusion. Avoid decorations that cause clutter or require you to rearrange a familiar room
- **Avoid safety hazards.** Substitute electric candles for burning candles. If you light candles, do not leave them unattended. Avoid fragile decorations or decorations that could be mistaken for edible treats, like artificial fruits.
- **Play music.** Familiar or favorite holiday music may be enjoyable. Adjust the volume to be relaxing

## Adapt holiday activities

- **Prepare together.** Mix batter, decorate cookies, open holiday cards, or make simple decorations. Focus on the task rather than the outcome.
- **Avoid disruptions.** Plan a gathering at the best time of day for the person living with dementia. Keep daily routines in place as much as possible.
- **Provide a quiet place.** If you are inviting guests over, provide a quiet place for the person living with dementia to have time alone or visit with one person at a time.
- **Plan meaningful activities.** Read a favorite holiday story, look at photo albums, watch a favorite holiday movie or sing songs
- **Keep outings brief.** If you are attending gatherings, plan to be brief or be prepared to leave early if necessary. Make sure there is a place to rest or take a break.

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## Celebrate at a care facility

- **Celebrate in the most familiar setting.** Consider holding a small family celebration at the facility. Participate in holiday activities planned for the residents.
- **Minimize visitor traffic.** Arrange for a few family members to drop in on different days. A large group may be overwhelming.

## Prepare holiday visitors

- **Provide an update.** Let guests know ahead of time about any changes the person living with dementia may be experiencing since their last visit. Providing a photo may help people prepare for changes in appearance.
- **Offer communication tips.** Suggest ways for guests to listen patiently, no criticizing and correcting errors and no interrupting.
- **Suggest activities.** Tell guests ahead of time what activities you have planned or suggest something they might bring, such as a photo album.

## Take care of yourself

- **Delegate.** Let family and friends help!
- **Make time for yourself.** Ask a family member or friend to give you respite so you can enjoy a holiday outing without care partnering responsibilities.
- **Manage others' expectations.** Set realistic expectations for what you can contribute to family holiday celebrations.

SOURCES: Alzheimer's Society (U.K.), Alzheimer Society (Canada), NIH National Institute on Aging, Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's Foundation of America