

Holiday Tips for Everyone Living With Dementia

Tips for the Person with Dementia

- Take some time to relax.
- Do what you enjoy.
- Consider letting people know when you need a break or are having trouble.
- Make a list with your partner of what you would like to do this season and use the list to help keep on track.
- Consider saying – “I know I know you, but I just can’t place you...” when someone greets you and you aren’t sure who they are to you.
- Watch or listen to old, familiar music, movies, and/or TV programs that make you feel good.
- Try to exercise every day.
- Drink plenty of water each day.
- Be careful about too many sweets.
- Work with a partner to do familiar and fun activities, for example:

Making, signing, or mailing cards

Making up mixes with recipes to share

Baking something and wrapping it

Tips for the Care Partner

- Keep gatherings small and visits short.
- Offer time outs.
- Make a list of fun things to do.
- Encourage visitors to understand before they begin interacting.
- Encourage going out and doing something fun together rather than just talking.
- Ask visitors to bring old pictures, familiar items or props, and be prepared to reminisce about old times.
- Take breaks from each other.
- Consider cutting back on traditions if they seem distressing.
- Help visitors by introducing them with orienting information, if they forget to do so.
- Exercise and monitor your stress.
- Have a friend help the person with dementia select gifts, shop, or do something special for loved ones, including you!

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Tips for the Visitor

- Begin visits with a friendly smile and offering your hand for a handshake.
- Introduce yourself by name, then **pause**. If the person still doesn’t seem to know you, give them more information about yourself.
- Use shorter phrases and **pause** between thoughts or ideas, giving the person a chance to respond.
- Talk about the old times more than recent information.
- Keep memories positive if possible.
- Accept general comments, don’t push for specifics.
- Be prepared to hear stories over and over. Use pictures or props to bring up old memories... and laugh.
- Do something with the person rather than just talking to them.
- Don’t correct errors, go with the flow of the conversation.
- If the person says something distressing or seems worried, realize it may not be true. They are not lying to you, their brain is lying to them. Consult with the care partner before taking action.