

HOLIDAY TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

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I don't know about you, but for me the Holidays are so much fun... but they can also be stressful.

There are always so many extra things to do: socializing with family and friends, decorating the house and yard, buying gifts, putting up a Christmas tree, and sending out Christmas cards.

You may be planning family gatherings or a Holiday party for friends and colleagues. You may be going to parties or get-togethers. You may spend more of your time doing volunteering or you may find that your work may make more demands on you as the year draws to an end. Perhaps family members are coming in from out-of-town to visit. Whatever it is that you are doing, the Holidays often put more pressure on you, the caregiver. If there is more stress on you, your loved one may also experience stress.



The elderly and those with dementia like routine. They like small groups better than large groups. They like calm and quiet more than hustle, bustle, and noise. So when things change for you, they change for your loved ones. As their carefully crafted daily routine becomes more interrupted, your loved one is likely to experience a partial or a complete meltdown, or worst yet, several meltdowns.

To avoid any problems, here are some ideas for you, caregiver:

- Organize your time
- Leave plenty time to complete all of your activities
- Start planning your festivities early in the season
- Understand that there are always things that go wrong and make that alright
- Enlist someone to help you
- Do as much as possible ahead of time
- Schedule time for yourself and for fun things
- Be sure to weave in extra time, extra care, and extra attention for your loved one



Here are some things to remember when you include your elder in the Holidays festivities:



- ❖ Have at least one other person assigned to watch your loved one at all times. They can alert you if your loved one is exhibiting adverse behavior when you are busy with holiday activities.
- ❖ If the house is full of noise and chaos, find a quieter spot for the elder to sit and observe. They can still be part of the festivities, but not the center of attention.
- ❖ Have only one or two people talk to the elder at a time. Keep the visits short, unless the elder is enjoying it.
- ❖ If the elder looks tired or restless, arrange for them to take a nap.
- ❖ If they get agitated, use an "interrupt and redirect" technique to break the pattern, and then find a quiet place for them and stay with them. You may want to read to them or play some relaxing music to help in calming the loved one.



If you as a caregiver, take a little bit of extra time to get organized and think about the needs of an elder loved one during the Holidays, then everyone will be able to enjoy the time together, even more. If you are calm during the Holidays you will be able to fully enjoy the festivities, friends, and family.

YOU CAN KEEP THE 'HO! HO! HO!' IN YOUR HOLIDAYS!

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