



Maintaining Holiday Traditions When Your Loved One Has Dementia:

A Guide to Meaningful, Manageable Celebrations

The Holidays are a time for cherished traditions, but when a loved one has dementia, these activities can become challenging. This guide provides practical suggestions to simplify traditions, helping your loved one stay connected, enjoy the festivities, and remain engaged in the celebration.

1. Keep Baking Simple and Fun

- ❄️ **Simplify Ingredients:** If baking from scratch is too confusing or time-consuming, consider using premade cookie dough. Your loved one can enjoy using cookie cutters, adding sprinkles, or decorating with frosting. This allows them to stay involved without the stress of complex steps.
- ❄️ **Limit Choices:** Instead of a range of cookie shapes or decorating options, limit choices to a few colors and shapes, which can reduce overwhelming decisions and keep them engaged.



2. Decorate Together with Ease

- ❄️ **Use Familiar Decorations:** Bring out decorations that your loved one might recognize from past holidays. Familiarity can evoke memories, as well as a sense of comfort and peace.
- ❄️ **Choose Simple Decorations:** Avoid fragile or overly complicated items. Soft, plush ornaments, non-breakable items, and lights with minimal flicker can be beautiful and safe for everyone to enjoy.

3. Create a Sensory Experience

- ❄️ **Incorporate Favorite Holiday Scents:** Scented candles (like cinnamon or pine) or a simmer pot with orange slices and cloves can bring the holiday spirit without overwhelming the senses.
- ❄️ **Play Holiday Music:** Music can have a powerful effect on memory. Curate a playlist of your loved one's favorite holiday songs to play in the background, as it can encourage singing along or simply enjoying the familiar tunes.





4. Adapt Gift-Giving Customs

- ❄️ **Simplify Wrapping:** For loved ones who enjoy giving gifts, opt for simple gift bags rather than complex wrapping paper and ribbons. This can make the experience feel enjoyable without requiring fine motor skills.
- ❄️ **Encourage Homemade Gifts:** Craft simple, enjoyable gifts together, such as filling mason jars with hot chocolate ingredients or putting together small treat bags for family members.

5. Focus on Meaningful Traditions

- ❄️ **Watch Holiday Movies Together:** If outdoor activities or larger gatherings are too much, watching a favorite holiday movie can be a peaceful and joyful way to celebrate together.
- ❄️ **Share Stories and Photos:** Bring out a holiday album and reminisce together. Photos from past celebrations can bring back memories and start conversations about holidays from earlier years.

6. Plan Gatherings Thoughtfully

- ❄️ **Set Realistic Expectations:** Large, noisy gatherings can be overwhelming. Instead, plan smaller, quieter gatherings with familiar family members.
- ❄️ **Designate a Quiet Space:** Provide a cozy, quiet area where your loved one can retreat if they need a break. Familiar items, like a favorite blanket or book, can help them feel comfortable.



7. Enjoy the Holidays on Your Own Schedule

- ❄️ **Celebrate at Your Own Pace:** Rather than adding stress by adhering to a rigid calendar, remember that holiday celebrations can be whenever it works best for your family. Set a day that allows everyone to gather in a relaxed environment. This flexibility lets you plan in a way that's best for your loved one's comfort and your peace of mind.
- ❄️ **Focus on the Experience:** Engage in favorite traditions with less pressure on timing. This approach can help everyone enjoy the holiday without unnecessary stress.

9. Consider Respite Care to Recharge as a Caregiver

- ❄️ **Relieve Holiday Stress:** Respite care at a senior living community can give you the time and flexibility to prepare for holiday gatherings, go shopping, or enjoy celebrations with other family members. By using respite care, you ensure your loved one is safe and well cared for while you take time to attend other family celebrations or manage holiday tasks.
- ❄️ **Year-Round Support:** Remember, respite care isn't only available during the holidays; our program is open year-round, offering you a chance to focus on your own health, run important errands, or take a much-needed break.

8. Prepare for Changes with Flexibility and Love

- ❄️ **Accept That Traditions May Look Different:** It's okay if things don't go exactly as planned. Focus on small moments of joy and connection rather than perfection.
- ❄️ **Stay Attentive to Their Comfort:** If a particular tradition becomes overwhelming, allow space to adapt or step away. The goal is for everyone to feel calm, happy, and at ease.



For more information on how to support your loved one during the holidays or to learn about our respite care programs, contact us at 614-761-9200.