

HANDLING THE HOLIDAYS FOR CAREGIVERS

The holidays can be both an emotionally satisfying and emotionally stressful time for caregivers. You may find that seeing all friends and family together with your loved one produces feelings of happiness, or it may elicit the blues. Regardless, here are some tips that you can use to help navigate the holiday season.

- If hosting, do not be afraid to tell certain friends or family members not to come to your gathering. Perhaps a small gathering is what is best for your loved one this year, and you can say “I’m sorry, but this year my loved one is not well enough for us to host a large group. Perhaps we can arrange a visit after the holidays in a smaller setting.”
- Do less. It is okay to not send those holiday cards, or to hang up those Christmas lights.
- You are not responsible for your loved one’s mood. They may feel sad, or be unable to participate how they used to in previous years. You cannot assume responsibility or feel guilty for things you cannot control.
- Acknowledge that this can be an emotionally difficult time, and let it out. If you feel comfortable doing so, talk to friends and family about how you are feeling this year.
- Connect with others in the community for support.
- Be aware of burnout. It can be tempting to try to create a picture-perfect holiday, but no holiday is perfect given the stresses of traveling and familial obligations. This holiday is no different, and it is nearly impossible to create a holiday that fits a traditional convention.
- If you do not want to commit yourself and your loved one to a full-blown visit, establish that you will “drop by” the engagement. Swing by for dessert, or stop by in the beginning for a little bit. Develop a quick exit strategy for yourself and your loved one to prevent feeling trapped at a party as a back-up plan.
- If cooking at home will prove too stressful and overwhelming, start a new tradition and order in.
- Ask family and friends for help, and delegate tasks. Arrange help early, and let family and friends know what you need. Only fulfill tasks that you enjoy doing and provide you little stress.
- It is okay if you need to scale back on shopping if you are on a tighter budget. You can always discuss gift expectations ahead of time if gift-giving is making you anxious this year.
- Seek respite when you can, and do not be afraid to ask for breaks. Be realistic about what you can handle, and say no to things that may bring you down or burn you out.
- Scale back on the festivities if you need to, and discuss expectations with your family ahead of time.
- Celebrate your holiday with whatever is the best fit for you and your loved one.