

Impressions

MEMORY CARE

at BRYN MAWR 

Engaging Days. Meaningful Moments.

Memory Loss and the Holidays: Coping Tips for Caregivers

For families with a loved one living with memory loss resulting from Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia, the hustle and bustle of the holiday season can create an extra measure of stress and anxiety. Memory loss experts say the best way to cope with the approaching holiday season is to anticipate the challenges and plan for them in well in advance.

More specifically, authorities at the [Mayo Clinic](#), the [Alzheimer's Association](#)[®] and [Dementia Today](#) offer excellent suggestions for preparing your loved one and the rest of your family for the holidays – to keep the spirits bright and the nerves calm. For example:

1. **Make visitors aware of changes in your loved one** – For family members and visitors who haven't seen your loved one in a while, it helps to prepare them on what changes to expect in their behavior or abilities. Call distant visitors a week beforehand to explain your loved one's memory loss and share a few tips on interacting with them. Your guests will appreciate the notice.
2. **Limit the number of guests** – A large, loud crowd of people can be overwhelming for the healthiest person, let alone someone with memory loss. Try to limit the number of visitors in your home. Instead of having everyone over for a large party, hold a few smaller gatherings or dinners with a few guests at a time.
3. **Modify your holiday traditions** – Maintaining holiday traditions can be extremely important. However, your loved one's memory loss might make certain activities difficult. For example, if your loved one suffers from "sundowning," or disorientation and irritability in the evening, a big holiday dinner could be challenging. Instead, try holding the meal at noon.
4. **Involve your loved one** – Help your loved one with memory loss feel like they are still a part of traditions by finding simple, yet meaningful, ways for them to be involved. Have them help decorate by handing you items as you hang them up, or give them the job of opening cards and hanging them on the fridge. Let them pick out the holiday music that you play.
5. **Decorate appropriately** – Beware of how holiday decorations might affect your loved one. Their memory loss makes processing sensory information difficult, so going overboard on bright lights or large, shiny decorations could be unpleasant to them. Tone down decorations to more subtle, simpler objects. Also, be careful to avoid lighting candles and other open flames.
6. **Stick to their routine** – Routines are a wonderful tool for caring for a loved one with memory loss. Yet, the holidays often threaten daily routines with extra festivities and tasks, events and visitors. As much as you are able, make your loved one's routine the priority and schedule extra holiday events around their stabilizing activities. Keep meals and bedtimes the same, only go out during the times they are at their best, etc.
7. **Adjust gift-giving** – Ask friends and family members to give your loved one useful and meaningful gifts. Offer suggestions of gifts that might make things easier, such as large-print books or a new digital clock or watch. Items that are pleasing to the senses – a fuzzy robe or socks, scented lotion, a soft blanket – can provide comfort to someone with memory loss. Meaningful gifts such as photo albums, copies of their favorite movies or framed pictures are other good ideas.

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8. **Know your own limits** – Understand that while you're caring for your loved one with memory loss, you may not be able to do everything you did before. Explain this to your family members and delegate tasks as necessary. Maybe a sibling's family can host dinner this year. Ask your spouse to take care of the shopping for a few weeks so you have more time to prepare for other activities. Know how much you can reasonably manage and don't feel guilty for doing less than you might want to.
9. **Take care of yourself!** – Of equal importance, take care of your physical and mental health during the holidays. Allow yourself to take breaks where you can relax and recharge. Perhaps place some not-so-subtle hints about how nice it would be to receive a gift of respite care once the holidays are over!

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Loved ones with Alzheimer's disease or other memory impairments require specialized care and support. They also deserve a lifestyle rich in dignity and fulfillment. Impressions Memory Care at Bryn Mawr provides residents with *Engaging Days* and *Meaningful Moments* that emphasize individual abilities, encourage [socialization](#) and promote the highest level of [independence](#) possible. We offer a complete continuum of leading-edge [programs, services and amenities](#) that address the total physical, emotional and social needs of residents in a caring setting that offers [individual suites](#) with large private baths and the comfort of home. Our community touches hearts and changes lives.

If and when the time comes to seek additional help, place your trust in Impressions Memory Care at Bryn Mawr. We lift the stresses and worries of being a caregiver from your shoulders, enabling you and your family to enjoy time with your loved one again.

For more information, please call Sharon at 484.380.5404 or [contact us](#) online.

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