

Caregiving and the Holiday Season: *Balancing Traditions, Time, and Family*

Caring for a parent, spouse, or other older adult through a holiday season can magnify the stresses. Is it time to re-evaluate traditions and set some new priorities? What can you do to help you enjoy the best of the holidays and still be a good caregiver?

- What traditions are priorities?
- What needs to change?
- What does the older adult want and need?
- What do you, the caregiver, need?
- What roles can other family members play? How can they help you?

Tips for Better Holidays

Family communication & relationships. Relationships change as the health of the care receiver changes. Be specific and ask for help from other family members with meals, errands, and even where to have family gatherings. Don't forget to include the younger generations! Give them a chance to spend more time with elders and help you by sharing responsibilities.

Plan Ahead for the well being of the care receiver. Perhaps medication refills need to be made or doctor visits scheduled before the rush of the holidays begins. Ask the older adult what would make the holiday enjoyable for them. Help the loved one choose one or more favorite outfits to wear during holiday activities.

Gifts for older adults. What do they like or don't like? What have they received and never used? Some suggestions are homemade gifts; gift cards to favorite restaurants; family photo calendars; scrapbooks, family albums, framed photos; candles (if not a safety issue); bath gels, body lotions, or favorite aftershave; special coffee, tea, or food item (if meets dietary and doctor guidelines); a specially written letter by a family member; clothing that you know he/she would appreciate and use; an assistive device such as a large number phone or calculator.

Practical Stress Management Tips for the Caregiver – Below are 18 ways to make the holidays better.

1. Keep things simpler.
2. Make a list and prioritize what you need to do. Reduce or eliminate some of the things you list!
3. Lower your expectations and enjoy the simple things.
4. Recognize your limits.
5. Reduce the amount of holiday decorating and baking you might usually do.
6. Be more realistic about your own energy and abilities.
7. Do some deep breathing frequently to help you stay calmer and more relaxed.
8. Slow down and be kind to yourself.
9. Eat nutritious meals but treat yourself to a few holiday foods you like.
10. Get as much sleep and rest breaks as you can.
11. Schedule some time for yourself.
12. Make exercise a priority, even if it is only walking.
13. Have some fun.
14. Listen to music.

15. Limit shopping and shop early.
16. Keep your sense of humor. How about watching a favorite movie?
17. Take one day at a time.
18. Remember the past but also make memories for the future. How can you make 2008 memories ones you want to remember?

Meals-on-Wheels of Johnson and Ellis Counties

For information about home-delivered meals, help with transportation, or to schedule a caregiver seminar or presentation at your library, church, company, or group:

Call (817) 558-2840 or (972) 351-9943 email info@mowjec.org