



In Care of You

A newsletter for Caregivers from Greene County Council on Aging

November 2022

Coping with the Holidays as a Caregiver

Holidays can be especially stressful and emotional for caregivers and those living with dementia. Caregivers may feel a sense of loss due to the noticeable decline in their loved one since the last big holiday. The person living with dementia may be aware of their own decline, they may not recognize family members any more, or they may be missing someone who passed away.

With the right planning, gatherings and traditions can be less stressful and more enjoyable. Here are some suggestions:

Be Flexible

Listen to your instincts. Caregivers are the best judges of what their loved one with dementia will enjoy and what might make them feel anxious or uncomfortable, even scared. Be flexible. Changes may be necessary.

* A family brunch or lunch might be better than a dinner if your loved one becomes confused or agitated in the evenings due to sundowning.

* If your loved one is bothered by large gatherings, have smaller gatherings (visitors come a few at a time rather than all at once).

* No matter where you gather, be sure there's a quiet place you can take your loved one to rest if needed.

Prepare family in Advance

Have a family meeting (in person, on the phone, or online) to discuss what family members need to know about the person living with dementia in advance. Families should be aware of what symptoms they might see; the importance of keeping the established routine;

and to have patience during conversations without correcting or challenging. Remind family not to be offended if the person living with dementia forgets who they are or acts inappropriately. It will be up to you, as the knowledgeable caregiver, to know in what situations your loved one living with dementia is most comfortable.

Travel and Disrupted Routines

Routine is largely important for managing symptoms of dementia. If the thought of travel is too overwhelming to you, it's okay to ask relatives to come to you, or skip the event altogether.

When making travel arrangements, consider the stage of your loved ones' disease, and whether a trip is a good idea. The following may also be helpful: Pack any medications prescribed and be sure to bring enough doses. Bring a change of clothes (or a few) in case of incontinence issues, spills, etc. Ask a friend or another relative to come along to provide assistance. Schedule extra bathroom stops along the way to your destination. Schedule extra rest breaks. Travel during the day rather than the evening.

November is

National Family Caregivers Month

The Council recognizes & celebrates you wonderful caregivers and all that you do for your loved ones throughout the year.



In Care of You

Providing support for those who support others

Helping a caregiver in tangible ways

People who are caring for loved ones on a full-time basis often don't have time to do chores or home maintenance the way they once did. As available time for chores is reduced due to caregiving responsibilities, caregivers need hands-on help from family, friends, and neighbors.

Friends and neighbors can help by raking leaves, mowing the grass, shoveling snow, washing windows, or cleaning gutters, wash the car or take the car for an oil change, run to the post office or the grocery store. They can even stay and visit with the care receiver for a few hours while the caregiver goes out on their own.

Family members can help set up electronic accounts and establishing passwords for those accounts, shred old documents, go through the mail, clean out closets, garage, or refrigerator. Family members can help schedule doctor appointments, assist with the maze of medical bills and paperwork that needs to be filled out

for insurance benefits, and they can help with balancing the check book or filing taxes. Family members can also help a caregiver and care receiver stay in touch with relatives by hosting family gatherings that the caregiver used to host.

Children can help by filling bird feeders, walking or bathing the dog, change the cat's litter box, dust and clean areas in the home, help with electronic devices, put up and take down holiday decorations, create a photo album. Teens who drive can run errands in the car or help with yard work, change light bulbs, and clean hard to reach places in the home that are easier for young strong bodies to do than older bodies.

So, caregivers, when your friend or family members ask what they can do, be sure to suggest something — they want to help you, and you should let them.

Caregivers are

indispensable

generous

*Hard-working
essential*

devoted

FEARLESS
caring

appreciated

invisible
Heroes