

# Holiday Gatherings for Older Adults

For most of us, the holidays are a wonderful time to share the joys of family life and friendship. But for many older adults, the holidays can be highly stressful, confusing, or even depressing if their mental, physical, and emotional needs are not taken into account.



Here are some things to consider when hosting a holiday event:



**BE INCLUSIVE.** Adult children often become so busy with their own lives that they fail to recognize how much their parents look forward to spending time with them during the holidays.



**PLAN AHEAD.** If older family members tire easily or are vulnerable to over-stimulation, limit the number of activities they are involved in or the length of time they are included.



**BE PATIENT AND UNDERSTANDING.** Remember to be patient, respectful, and understanding if an aging parent cannot or chooses not to participate in a family activity. Sometimes, they just want to listen and watch, which they may equally enjoy.



**REMOVE OBSTACLES.** Be thoughtful of the home environment, including how your parent may get to and from the gathering. Make sure the environment is safe and remember to have a comfortable and inclusive place for your loved one to rest and relax.



**AVOID EMBARRASSING MOMENTS.** Avoid making embarrassing comments. If an older person forgets a recent conversation, don't make it worse by saying, "Don't you remember?"

Below are some inclusive activities that can keep your loved one included and engaged:

Take a drive to look at holiday lights – possibly to a former neighborhood or other area of interest. ✓

Watch old home videos, rent a movie, or play a familiar board game. ✓

Play a game of reminiscence. Have everyone write questions they would like to ask of the people in the room about their history and put the questions in a jar. ✓



Use picture albums, family videos and music, or theme songs from old radio or TV programs to help stimulate memories and encourage older seniors to share their stories. ✓



Stroll down memory lane. Older adults may have difficulty remembering recent events, but they are often able to share stories and observations from the past. ✓



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