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## **Celebrating the Holidays with Someone Suffering from Dementia**

The holiday season is one of anticipation as well as reflection. It is sometimes the one time of year when you get to see certain relatives and share old memories. Despite the dropping temperatures, these special moments combined with the festive spirit of lights and decorations warm our hearts, making the holidays a special time of year for all ages to look forward to.

Yet amidst all this happiness may be lurking the stress and anxiety of caring for a loved one with dementia. This may be a parent, grandparent, spouse, or other loved one, and whether you've been caring for him/her for five years or five weeks, this holiday season is certain to be different than last year's.

If the person with dementia lives with you, you might feel the need to tone down the holiday activities. You might not have time to do all the decorating you normally do, and frankly, some decorations might not be safe for someone with dementia. Meals might need to be simplified for ease of preparation, and you might not be able to jaunt around the neighborhood looking at decorations and lights as much as last year.

Perhaps the most important part of the holiday season is the time shared with family and friends. Remember the importance of telling everyone about grandma's condition. Inform guests of what to expect and how to handle disruptive behavior.

Lastly, the holidays are a good time of the year to remind yourself of the support system surrounding you, and to enlist help when you need it. Guests and relatives are usually thrilled to contribute more than just bringing a fruitcake or salad—see if people will commit to cooking and clean up duties if you need to take a few minutes to take care of an elder family member.

## **About Memory Care Home Solutions**

Memory Care Home Solutions is a non-profit organization that exists to extend and improve quality time at home for families caring for loved ones with memory loss, dementia, or Alzheimer's disease. We come to you; no diagnosis is necessary for our consultation; and our services are made available regardless of ability to pay. Our professionals train families regarding safety of the living environment, provide strategies for addressing difficult behaviors, and offer suggestions for maintaining appropriate levels of independence in your loved one, all with the ultimate goal of reducing caregiver stress. To ensure families continue to benefit after our initial consultation, we schedule follow-up phone conferences throughout the year, and our professionals are always available to discuss concerns family caregivers may have. Founded in 2002, and later funded with a generous grant from the Missouri Foundation for Health, Memory Care Home Solutions fills a critical in-home support and training void for caregivers. Washington University in St. Louis collaborates with the organization to evaluate outcome success. For more information, please contact Erin Kelley at (314) 645-6247, via email [ekelley@memorycarehs.org](mailto:ekelley@memorycarehs.org) or visit [www.memorycarehs.org](http://www.memorycarehs.org).

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