

5 tips for engaging your loved one during holiday gatherings

For many, the holiday season is a busy time of year with family, social and work gatherings. For people living with dementia, this time of year can be a little bit more complex. If they are living alone, it can be an isolating time, where friends and family that used to pop in, may be on holidays. And for some, it can be a really busy time with many gatherings.

For someone living with dementia, isolation can significantly impact them and their moods. Isolation isn't always being physically alone, but rather them being unintentionally excluded in a room full of people.

Here are 5 tips on how to include your loved one living with dementia at your holiday gatherings during this time.

1. You may prefer to have a smaller gathering rather than a large overstimulating gathering, so that the person living with dementia can participate easily in conversations and enjoy the moment.
2. If you can't avoid large gatherings, you and your loved ones should ensure there are quiet spaces to have one-on-one conversations, or ensure you are actively involving your loved one living with dementia by creating opportunities for conversations with small groups of people.
3. You might have shorter gatherings. Instead of having a three-hour barbeque, you may choose to have a shorter time frame for the meal so that the person living with dementia is at their best all the way through the gathering.



4. Predictability is important during this time. You may want to write in a diary the time of gathering, what time they should be ready and the person that will be picking them up. For some, they may need you to choose the clothing they need to wear. Helping by marking the dates and times in a diary or on a calendar can become a visual prompt for your loved one living with dementia.
5. If you're going away and your loved one is at risk of being on their own, try and plan for someone to pop in and check in on them daily, or you may even consider respite care (If you are considering respite, please ensure it's the right type of environment and that they have time to settle before you go away).



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