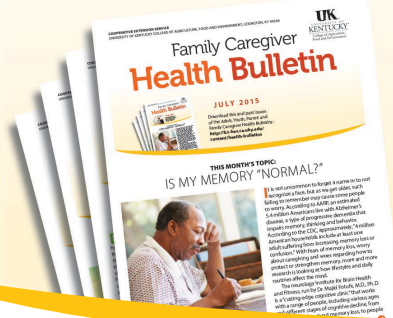


Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



DECEMBER 2015

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: CAREGIVING AND THE HOLIDAYS



While holidays can be a time of joy and happiness, they can also bring stress and frustration when it comes to caregiving. Out of town friends and family, traditions and various events can disrupt daily routines, leaving caregivers feeling out of control or overwhelmed. Holiday chaos may also make caregivers feel as if they cannot participate in holiday activities as they would like. As a result, the holidays and holiday planning can become an additional stress versus a joy.

To make the holidays more enjoyable for both you and the person to whom you offer care, it is important to pursue better communication, connection and support from family and friends. According to the Family Caregiver Alliance National Center on Caregiving, caregivers should:

- **Communicate.** Being honest with people about the situation and

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Let friends and family help you. This can be the best holiday gift that they can give, allowing you to take time for yourself.

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your loved one's impairments can help diminish the feeling of being in the caregiving game alone or feeling as if you are not appreciated. Communication will also better allow others to respond appropriately to the situation.

- **Adapt.** During the holidays it is important to be flexible. You may need to modify time spent in your home or time away from your home. It is okay to allow another family member to host a dinner or to lessen the intensity of your usual festivities and traditions.
- **Avoid anxiety.** Create a space in the environment that provides your loved one with peace and quiet. Quiet time and less stimulation can reduce the confusion often caused by background noise and multiple conversations.
- **Enjoy your loved one.** Use the holidays as a reminder to sit down and take time to talk and reminisce with your loved one. Looking through old photos, unpacking and hanging decorations together or doing other activities can help you remember the good times and importance of family.
- **Take time for you.** Let friends and family help you. This can be the best holiday gift that they can give. Such respite allows you some well-deserved "time off" from your duty and opportunities for you to take time for yourself and seek out your personal stress outlets. If family is not comfortable with personal care, ask them to help you with another task, such as changing a lightbulb or shoveling the driveway to free up more of your time.

To make the holidays more enjoyable, it is important to pursue better communication, connection and support from family and friends.



- **Plan ahead.** Make arrangements with home care agencies or other health care providers who may be involved with holiday care.
- **Think about the positives.** There are many rewards to caregiving and it is important to reflect and remind yourself of the positives and all that you are doing well. Such reflection can also make you see that caregiving can be a time of personal growth.

While only you know what is best for and what works for you, it is important to remember that as a caregiver, you give and give and give. Therefore, during the holidays especially, you must recognize the signs of stress and burnout, communicate with and rely on your family friends, remember the joys of caregiving and not forget to take time for yourself.

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