

Festive Activities for Family Members with Dementia

Holidays are a wonderful, and often stressful, time of the year for families. When a family member has cognitive impairments, holidays can pose extra challenges. Planning ahead can make it easier to engage a family member who has cognitive decline and help them participate more fully. Try these activities to make holiday time special and fulfilling for all family members.

Play holiday music. Choose music that is familiar to your loved one, and encourage them to sing along. They may still remember the lyrics to their favorite songs.

Give them small tasks. Although your family member may not be able to prepare an entire holiday dinner or set the table, they can participate by completing small repetitive tasks, such as folding napkins or drying and sorting silverware.

Deck the Halls. Use unbreakable ornaments and holiday decorations to trim the tree and decorate your home. If possible, include some of your loved one's favorite decorations. Be sure to avoid tripping hazards, real flame, or life size objects that may frighten a person with dementia.

Sort ornaments. Sort unbreakable ornaments by color, size, or theme. Or simply place ornaments in sectioned storage boxes.

Bake cookies or a favorite dessert. This activity can be simplified by using premade cookie dough and frosting, premade pie shells, etc.

Make crafts. Keep the crafts simple and the time short.

Go for a walk or drive. Walking is great exercise and looking at neighborhood decorations may bring back memories of past holidays.

