

Tips to Create a Senior-Friendly Holiday Season

Holidays should be times for relaxation and joy, but sometimes, rather than the anticipated enjoyment, they become overly stressful, creating tension and unhappy times. With a little thought and pre-planning, however, those stress factors can melt away for a more enjoyable time for all.

- Include frail elderly family members in holiday preparations and activities only to the extent they are willing or able to participate.
- A great idea is to ask seniors what they need and how they want to celebrate. Their answers may surprise you.
- A large noisy party with many people may be too much stimulation for a frail senior or a person with dementia. A better idea would be to host small get-together visits instead. Consider designating a “quiet room” where an older person can take a break.
- Assign someone to be the day’s companion to the frail senior in order to make sure he or she is comfortable throughout the day with needs met.
- If the senior has some form of dementia, keep a normal daily routine if possible.
- Be cautious with decorations and noise. For example, candles are dangerous around elderly persons who have mobility and memory problems. Background music, even holiday music, can be distracting if the senior has a hearing impairment.
- Preparation is the key to any successful outing. However, a day out with a frail senior should never be spontaneous. Vet the activity to ensure that it is suitable for the senior and prepare for a wide range of possible circumstances, including proper clothing, medications and snacks. Bathroom accessibility, including the ability to open, lock and unlock the door, is something that needs attention as well.
- Help seniors stick to their regular medication schedule. Also, pay attention to their alcohol consumption during holiday parties and gatherings. Alcohol can provoke inappropriate behavior or interfere with medications.
- Make certain seniors know that you appreciate their legacy and tell them you’re happy they’re with you.
- Challenge yourself to match the tempo of your frail elderly relatives or friends. The holidays are a great time to slow down instead of speed up. Think about all the things you can let remain undone instead of all the things that need to be done.

Sometimes spending time with senior friends or family members over the holidays uncovers a need for extra care at home, whether the need is for a few hours a week or several hours a day. For tips on how to open the conversation about home care or to learn more about our home care services, contact **Continuum** today.



Sources: About.com Senior Living, Suite 101