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Strategies for Having An Enjoyable Christmas With Those Who Have Dementia

Learn what activities and gifts will make those with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia smile this holiday season. These activities and gifts ensure you and your loved one or client a delightful Christmas, this year

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRLog (Press Release) – Dec 02, 2008 – Over 5.2 million people in the US now have Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. We all benefit from sharing Christmas with someone we care about. The smells, the sounds, and the sights bring back happy memories. People with dementia should have this opportunity too. Following these tips will ensure you and your loved one with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia a pleasurable holiday season. Use these tips to help you choose a gift they will enjoy now and in days and months to come.



These folks with dementia are singing their favorite Christmas carols, together

The gift of yourself is one of the best gifts you can give so do things together.

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One thing you can do is decorate for Christmas together

There is nothing like the excitement of preparing for the Christmas holiday together.

In order to make the decorating experience for someone with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia, better, follow these tips:

Have most of the decorating complete before you involve the dementia person. Then they can help you with the finishing touches.

Buy unbreakable ornaments. They are much safer. However, if your dementia friend likes to put inedible objects in his mouth, do not use any

ornaments

Do not use candy canes or any edible decorations on the tree. Do not use ones that even look edible

What safe things can you use?

In most cases, garland is safe

Angels made out of material are most likely appropriate.

Here is another activity you do together. Make ornaments out of old Christmas cards, together...

Cut out the pictures on the front. Punch a hole near the top of the picture and put string or ribbon through the hole. You can then hang these homemade ornaments on the tree.

You know the person with Alzheimer's disease the best. You know what is most likely appropriate.

You can have two trees. Keep the room to the one with the traditional decorations locked unless you or someone can supervise the person with dementia.

Here is something else you can do together. You can have the person with dementia put Christmas window clings up. You and the dementia person can display unbreakable Christmas knickknacks.

Yet another idea is to make a tree out of paper and display pictures from past Christmases. This is not only fun to look at, but it is a great opportunity for reminiscing. This kind of tree is very safe

Share in the joy of the decorations of others

If decorating is too much for you, or you feel that your decorations are not safe, or you want something wonderful to do, you can drive around town spotting all the decorations families, merchants, schools, town centers and libraries are displaying. Stay away from crowded malls, however.

Sing favorite Christmas carols often

Most families have favorite songs they sing. Even if a person with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia is non verbal, he or she may be able to sing most of the words to a favorite song. Singing is a great activity. It lifts spirits and is good for the lungs.

Pray with them.

Most folks with dementia have strong ties to their religion. Even those with advanced dementia may spontaneously recite portions of a prayer service that was part of their past.

The problem may be to find a service that is appropriate. The traditional service is long and crowded. Here are a few suggestions

Go at the beginning or end of the service. That is when the least amount of parishioners are in attendance.

Contact some assisted living or nursing homes in the area. Many of them have short simple services highlighting the important prayers. This is a win, win situation. You can see what a place is like, and most

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often, activity directors love having visitors attend group activities. It makes all involved feel good. If this is not possible, have a short service at home. If you explain the situation to the priest or a member of the church he or she will let you borrow or buy a prayer book. He may even drop by for a visit. This experience is sure to bring a smile to their face and yours.

Carry on a family tradition

All families have something special they do around Christmas time. Of course, most go to church. What about after that? Maybe you went to Aunt Mary's. Aunt Mary may no longer be around, but you can recreate the atmosphere that was there. Invite one or two understanding friends to help you with this. The memories of visiting Aunt Mary will be there

Related to this is talking about past experiences on Christmas or other holidays.

Discuss what happened at Aunt Mary's. Regale a story about a funny experience that took place at Aunt Mary's.

Do not ask: Do you remember?, but rather, just tell the story and let your loved one with dementia add comments. Talk about family members both past and present. You might say: "When Uncle Harry shook the table, he made us all laugh". Tell some jokes and laugh some more. Laughter is the best medicine

Eat a traditional meal or foods together

This activity can wake up the taste buds of a dementia person. Before the holiday, discuss the recipes. Talk about different ingredients you need. Prepare a simple recipe together. Plan the meal. Ask: What should we eat first?etc.

Have him or her help set the table or fold the napkins.

You can talk about favorite family foods. Then make sure you have some of these favorites during the actual meal.

Do not forget to invite some children over.

Folks with Alzheimer's disease are still hard wired to love children, especially babies. Buy a few special presents for the children, Have the person with dementia, help you wrap them. Perhaps invite one family to this gathering. Too many people may over whelm someone with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. If there are no children available to share Christmas with you, get the book, Adorable Photographs of Our Baby, Meaningful, Mind Stimulating Activities, and More for the Memory Challenged, Their Loved Ones and Involved Professionals. This book has lovely baby photographs that are sure to put a smile on the face of someone with dementia. Also it is loaded with many helpful ideas and resources.

These are only a few suggestions. As stated earlier, you your loved one or client, with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia, the best. No matter what, keep smiling. Remember, you set the tone. Never argue. Also try to adapt and modify things you used to do so the dementia person will be successful at the activity. Old favorite activities usually work best even if you have to make a few changes. And, of course, always remember to smile!

For more information visit <http://alzact.today.com> or <http://dementia.today.com>

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