

HOLIDAY TIPS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

By Mel Kelley, Memory Loss Navigators

Holidays can be stressful for all of us even if we are perfectly healthy. If we have memory loss or we are caring for someone who does, it can become even more stressful. Here are some tips and tricks to help you enjoy the holiday season more and stress less.

Things that make gatherings hard for people with dementia include:

- *Too many people
- *It's too loud
- *People are all talking at the same time
- *Music is playing or the tv is on = too many distractions
- *Some people are new to us.... don't know everyone OR can't remember some folks
- *Everyone is asking questions or saying "don't you remember?"

Ideas to reduce stress for all:

- *Smaller gatherings if possible OR several smaller tables at big gatherings
- *No music or tv in background
- *Ask people to speak one at a time
- *Nametags
- *Suggest to folks they refrain from saying "don't you remember" when clearly a person does not and that they ask fewer questions. A particularly good phrase to use in conversation with a person with dementia is "tell me more". Instead of saying "What are you singing at your choir concerts?" say "Tell me more about the songs you are singing at the choir concert."

Another great idea is to invite folks to sit with the person living with dementia one on one to visit or perhaps go for a walk if it's nice out. If the event goes on for a long period, build in a nap or quiet time to recharge.

ESPECIALLY FOR CAREGIVERS

- *Allow plenty of time to get ready
- *Expect that your person may ask you repeatedly about where you all are going.....be patient and try some redirection. Talk about other things or perhaps play some soothing music while riding in the car.
- *If you have to bring something for the meal, ask if you can bring drinks, bread, or a pie from the bakery.... something that doesn't involve cooking!
- *When you get to the event, ask for help. Perhaps a son, daughter or other relative or friend can "mind" mom or dad, freeing you up to enjoy yourself.
- *If the event goes all day, build in a nap or quiet time to recharge.
- *Book a sitter or companion for the following day so you can have some time to yourself.
- *Know that your spouse appreciates everything you are doing for them even when they forget to tell you!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!