



Medical Supplies for Care at Home Since 1957

Holiday Edition 2015

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Feature Article

5 Ways to Reduce Caregiver Stress During the Holidays

At the heart of every family are holiday traditions, gatherings and familiar joys of the season. Caregivers often feel overwhelmed during this time of year with limited time to clean, shop, cook and/or take a break.

With a little extra planning, flexibility and communication with family members, the holidays can be enjoyed without unnecessary worry and pressure.

Here are some helpful tips for reducing stress during the holidays:

Make a Wish List

Honor your own needs and express to your circle of family and friends what they can do for you. In the holiday spirit of giving, a helping hand may be readily available to you for something as simple as fixing a leaky faucet, respite care for a movie night or a few hours for errands.

Plan Ahead

Make a list of things you need to get done with due dates and allow others to help lighten the load. Communicating with family on who's doing what for a holiday gathering can ease the pressure, knowing it's a group effort.

Be Flexible

Sometimes family traditions need to change to make it easier on your loved one's care schedule and comfort zone. If the gathering needs to begin much earlier in the day or on a different day other than the real holiday to accommodate you, don't feel guilty.

Get Creative

When budgets are tight and the thought of gift-giving causes anxiety, consider simple, priceless gifts from the heart. An easy place to start: shop your photo albums for extra copies of a special memory to give to family members. Try a "white elephant" gift exchange to create a fun and memorable family experience that doesn't require shopping.

Reflect and Enjoy

Sit back and take time to reflect on and appreciate the blessings in your life. Share stories with friends and loved ones about your favorite holiday memories and/or get inspired by playing the music that you associate with the holiday season and your traditions.



Talking to Kids about Alzheimer's



To children who do not understand Alzheimer's disease, the changes they see in family members can be scary. It is important to explain it in a way kids can understand.

For younger children a simple "grandma is getting forgetful" may be enough explanation. It may be helpful to be as simple and straightforward as possible.

Kerry from Parents Magazine suggests that it's important to explain the Alzheimer's is a progressive condition and tell the children what they can expect as time goes on. For example, "Alzheimer's is changing the part of the brain responsible for memory and thinking, so grandma/grandpa is having trouble with making sense of the world."

Make sure that the children know that the family member with Alzheimer's still cares about them. Keep the relationship between the kids and the family member with Alzheimer's going by finding simple activities you can all enjoy together. Try reading out loud.

Show you are comfortable by calmly handling any anger or confusion that may occur from your family member with Alzheimer's. Make sure you do not force the children to interact if they are scared or uncomfortable.

Here are some recommended resources available to help kids understand and cope with Alzheimer's:

- The "Kids and Teens" section on the Alzheimer's Association website (alz.org) for informative videos and fact sheets
- Children's books, including:
 - "Singing with Momma Lou" by Linda Altman Jacobs
 - "The Graduation of Jake Moon" by Barbara Park
 - "Horse Whispers in the Air" by Dandi Daley Mackall
- Family-oriented Alzheimer's walks to support the cause and meet others in a similar situation



The Link Between Scents and Memories

Have you ever smelled a scent that brought memories back from your past? Chances are that you have. Sometimes scents can bring back memories we didn't even think we remembered. There's a scientific name for this phenomenon. It's called "Odor-Evoked Autobiographical Memory."

The other senses can evoke memories too, but the connection between smell and memory is the strongest. The scientific reason behind the connection between smell and memory has to do with the part of the brain they are processed in. Smell is processed in the Olfactory Bulb in the brain, which is located near the Amygdala and the Hippocampus, which are responsible for emotions and memory, respectively. Scientists believe that when you smell something in your earlier years the smell can get "tangled up with memories."

If you would like to bring back good memories for your elderly friends and family this holiday season, try producing smells that may bring back pleasant memories:

- Light a fire in the fireplace
- Heat up some apple cider and/or cinnamon sticks
- Light some pine-scented candles
- Bake cookies, pies, and/or turkey, or other memory-inducing scents



Caregiver Inspiration



Caregivers share a few of their favorite things...

"I treat every moment like a precious gift because I know the clock is ticking for the time we have left with mom. It's like the roles are reversed at night when I tuck her in and read a bedtime story. There's nothing more satisfying than to be this comfort to my mom." - Sylvia L.

"My daughter is non-verbal but every morning when I come into her room her bright eyes and sweet grin tell me she is happy and that really makes my day!" - Brenda R.

"It's been two years since my husband's stroke and the recovery process has not been easy. So many people think I lost what we had, but little do they know, our relationship is stronger than ever. The deep understanding I have of him now is the best part of this slow, but ever so rewarding journey." - Martha G.

"Families from every walk of life have so much in common when a loved one becomes ill. To be a home health nurse is a wonderful blessing I fully appreciate. I'm there as a source of comfort and trust in the eyes of people who need me and there's nothing I'd rather be doing in this life." - Carol D.



COMING SOON:
JANUARY 2016

Shield HealthCare's
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Announcement

Learn more at
shieldhealthcare.com/caring

Alzheimer's Association

Just for children

Helping You Understand Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease affects the brain. People who have the disease have trouble remembering, thinking, talking and taking care of themselves. Scientists don't know why people get Alzheimer's disease, but they are working hard to find the cause so they can stop it from happening. It is important to know that just because someone in your family has Alzheimer's disease, it doesn't mean you will get it.

Unscramble the words using the clues:

- NABIR** Alzheimer's disease affects the _____.
- FGOERT** People with Alzheimer's disease often _____.
- UASCE** Scientists are working hard to find the _____ of Alzheimer's disease.
- GUHS** _____ are things you can give a person with Alzheimer's disease.

People who have Alzheimer's disease may forget your name, see or hear things that are not there, get lost, have trouble sleeping or do or say the same things over and over. This can cause them to become confused, scared, nervous or angry with you for no reason. It is important to know that they do not mean to treat you badly.

Use Your Imagination:

You are on a class trip in a foreign land and you get separated from your class. You look for someone or something familiar, but see nothing.

How do you feel?

SCARED confused
MAD alone sad

This is what it feels like to have Alzheimer's disease.

JUST FOR CHILDREN FACT SHEET



Featured Caregiver Story: My Brother's Keeper

I didn't know I was a caregiver. I only knew I was a sister to a little brother who could not walk, talk, or care for himself. Scott was two years younger than me and as children, we were inseparable. I fed him, bathed him, changed his diapers, and cared for him while our mother was at work. Sometimes I stood him up and put his small feet on mine and pretended he was walking as I did.

It never crossed my mind that he was a burden. He was always a joy, laughing at my silly antics, cheering me on when I read him my tall tales, and holding my hand as we fell asleep in front of a roaring fire on Christmas Eve, waiting for Santa. When he died, I spoke at his funeral.

For all of my life, I had cared for him, missing so many activities other teenaged girls did. People had always felt sorry for me because I had to stay at home to care for him. I never felt sorry for myself. I gained far more than I missed as his sister and wanted people to know about how blessed I was to be Scott's sister. I gained a sense of awe at life from his eyes. I learned the art of appreciation for small things in life we so often overlook. I gained the knowledge that life is fragile, so we must handle with care this gift of living. My imagination soared as I developed games he could play, ways we could communicate outside the norm.

Yes, I was the one who cared for him, but he was the one who gave me a deeper life. I remember one day when he and I went riding around in my 1969 VW Bug on a hot summer day, one of our favorite activities. I secured him in the passenger's seat and rolled down the window so he could feel the cool breeze as we made our way through the mountains of our small town.

Stopping to rest and give him something to drink, Scott looked out the window to the mountains. Because he could not walk, he had never been on a mountain-top, never seen the view from high above. Without thought, I picked up my brother and placed him piggy-back on my small petite frame. I don't know how I did it, but I carried him to the top of a small hill, an overlook that provided him a spot to look at the beauty of the earth from a pinnacle. We laughed as we sat on that rock, amazed by my strength and his first time vision from far above.

He was my brother. He was my source of all that was good, my motivator to become a better person and reach higher than I ever thought I could become. He was not a handicap to me, he was an inspiration. Whatever pain he suffered, he never succumbed to feeling sorry for himself. Instead, he was my catalyst for living an empowered and compassionate life. I did not know I was his caregiver. I only knew he cared for me, a sister whose brother taught her how to walk strong, how to speak in love, and how to care for the least of these with joy and respect in a world that does not always care for those who see life with different eyes.

He was my mountain-top view.

By Malinda F.

References:

Alzheimer's Association
Chemse.oxfordjournals.org
AgingCare.com
Parents Magazine

Connect With Us & See What's New At...



Caregiver Connections Newsletter

INSPIRE



If you would like the chance to be one of our featured stories, please email your story to
caring@shieldhealthcare.com

Visit our caregiver community for more resources and inspiration at
shieldhealthcare.com/caregivers