


# The Family Caregiver's Guide to the *Holidays*



Learn how you  
can relax and  
enjoy the holiday  
season while  
caring for a senior  
loved one.

**HOME CARE**  
ASSISTANCE

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The holidays are a special time  
for families and friends to  
come together and celebrate  
lifelong traditions.

From decorating the house to organizing social gatherings and shopping for the perfect gifts, when you are also caring for a senior loved one, the stress can sometimes seem overwhelming.

Home Care Assistance has designed this resource to help family caregivers navigate the holiday season with minimal stress and lots of joy and laughter.



# Tips for Decorating *the Home*

How to help your senior loved one prepare for the holidays.

Maintaining traditions is an important part of the holiday season. Helping your senior loved one decorate his or her home can be an easy way to spread holiday cheer while bringing the two of you closer at the same time. Here are a few tips that will make the holiday preparation process easier.

## **Keep things simple.**

Don't feel like you have to go above and beyond to help your senior loved one prepare. Seniors appreciate the small things and likely won't expect extravagant decorations. Place a wreath on the door instead of opting for a large tree, or choose a menorah to put in a central location as opposed to decorating the whole house.

## **Ignore the DIY trend.**

"Doing it yourself" is trendy these days, but considering everything else going on during the holidays, don't

feel guilty if you purchase or reuse decorations—unless, of course, you enjoy DIY crafting projects!

## **Focus on spending quality time together.**

One of the most significant parts of the holiday season is quality time with your loved ones. Focus on spending time with your senior friends or family members while you help them prepare for the holidays. Remember, sitting with a cup of tea and sharing a memory can be more meaningful than creating a winter wonderland in the front yard.





## Senior-Friendly *Holiday Gatherings*

### **Ensure proper seating.**

Make sure your senior loved one has a comfortable place to sit at the party. It's best for his or her seat to be in a central location so that he or she can enjoy the company of others without feeling isolated.

### **Help facilitate one-on-one conversation.**

Although you want your loved one to be engaged with everyone at the party, make sure that you take time to talk with him or her one-on-one. Be mindful of hearing impairments. Either speak slowly and loudly, or move to a quiet location.

### **Enlist help from others.**

Plan in advance to have others help you care for your loved one. This way both of you will enjoy the party and you will have peace of mind knowing your loved one is in trusted hands.

### **Plan for special attention.**

If the host will be serving a meal at the event, help your loved one prepare his or her plate. If he or she has food allergies, or special nutritional needs, plan in advance and bring something that he or she will be able to enjoy.

### **Limit the event's duration.**

If you are the host, make sure the party doesn't last more than two hours. If you are not the host, don't feel bad if you need to leave early.

The holidays usually entail gatherings with family and/or friends. Whether it's a large family party, or an intimate dinner, holiday gatherings can be stressful to plan, or even attend, if you are currently caring for a family member or other loved one. Whether you are planning your own holiday party or attending one thrown by a friend or relative, if your senior loved one will be joining you, here are some helpful reminders to ensure you both have a nice time.



# *Holiday Recipes* Suitable for Seniors

Try these healthy and festive delicious dishes!



## Easy Baked Apples

Serves 1

### Ingredients:

- 1 apple, peeled, cored and cut in half
- 2 tsp butter
- 2 tsp brown sugar
- 1 tbsp oats
- 1 pinch cinnamon
- Water

### Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. In pan, place apple halves hollowed side up.
3. In small bowl, mix together margarine, brown sugar, oats and cinnamon with your fingers.
4. Stuff the mixture into hollowed apple halves.
5. Pour water into the pan ¼ of the way up so that they steam.
6. Bake for 25 minutes.



## Butternut Squash Apple Soup Recipe

Serves 4-6

### Ingredients:

- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 2 medium-sized butternut squash, peeled and cut into chunks (*you can also buy pre-peeled and pre-cut butternut squash at most grocery stores*)
- 2 green apples, diced
- 2 cups of vegetable broth
- 2 cups of water
- ⅛ teaspoon of ground thyme
- 1 cup of unsweetened soy milk
- 1 teaspoon of kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon of black pepper

### Method:

1. Sauté onion until golden brown.
2. Add squash, apple, broth, water and seasonings. Bring to a boil.
3. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 45 minutes, covered, until squash is tender.
4. Purée soup in a blender or using a hand mixer until smooth. Return to low heat and stir in soy milk. Serve warm.

## Healthy Sweet Potato Latkes

Serves 4

### Ingredients:

- 1 lb. of sweet potatoes, peeled and grated
- ¼ cup of sweet yellow onion, peeled and finely chopped
- ¼ cup of all-purpose flour
- 1 large egg, slightly beaten
- 1 cup of Greek-style yogurt
- 1 tablespoon of chives, finely chopped
- Kosher salt and pepper, to taste

### Method:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Cover a cookie sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, mix together all ingredients except yogurt and chives.
3. Use a spoon to drop the mixture onto a cookie sheet, placing each latke about 1 inch apart. Flatten each latke slightly with a large spoon or a glass.
4. Bake 12-15 minutes turning once, until golden brown. Top with yogurt and chives and serve immediately.



## Savory Stuffed Pumpkin

Serves 4

(From [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org))

### Ingredients:

- 4 small (1-lb) sugar/pie pumpkins
- 1 cup water
- Cooking spray
- 1 small onion, minced (1/2 cup)
- 2 stalks celery, small dice
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 cups cubed whole wheat bread
- 2 (3-oz) links apple chicken sausage (fully cooked), diced
- ¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- ½ tsp ground black pepper
- 1 tbsp fresh thyme, chopped

### Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Cut the tops off of the pumpkins (save the tops) and place the pumpkins face down in a 9x13-inch baking dish. Pour the water over the pumpkins and bake for 30 minutes. Remove the pumpkins from the pan, and set them aside to cool slightly; discard the water.
2. Meanwhile, spray a small sauté pan with the cooking spray and heat it over medium heat. Add



the onion and celery and sauté about 7 minutes, until softened; set aside to cool.

3. In a medium bowl, combine the remaining ingredients and mix until the bread is coated and starting to soften. Stir in the onion-celery mixture.
4. Place the pumpkins, cut-side up, in the backing dish and gently scoop out the seeds, taking care not to remove too much of the pumpkin flesh. Divide the filling mixture evenly among the pumpkins and cap with the pumpkin tops. Bake for 30 minutes. Remove the tops and bake for 10 minutes more. If desired, serve with the tops.

# Holiday Gift Ideas for Seniors

Take a look at some of our favorite products, services and experiences that would make great gifts for senior loved ones this holiday season!



### Sabi Folio Grande Pill Box

This well-designed, discrete pill box looks like a chic portfolio instead of the bulky, medical looking pill boxes that are more common. Holds up to ten pills a day including large vitamins!



### Fitbit Flex

This Fitbit product is a popular device to help individuals of all ages meet their fitness goals. The Fitbit Flex is sleek, comfortable and easy-to-use, as it simply tracks steps and buzzes once the users daily steps goal has been met. This is a great way to encourage seniors to get up and walk.



### Electronic Picture Frame

This product looks like a normal picture frame but rotates different photos that are attached to the device through a usb drive. This gift is an inexpensive way to help your loved one feel connected to family, friends and past memories.



### Senior Meal Service

An on-demand meal service can help seniors who live on their own with preparation. Mom's Meals is a company that designs meals specifically for seniors with healthy, high protein, high fiber and low-fat options. All meals arrive chilled to preserve freshness and can be heated and enjoyed at any time.



### A Special Outing

An invitation to a special event like the symphony, the Nutcracker, or a visit to a museum can be very meaningful to a senior loved one. Remember, quality time is a gift in itself so an outing is a good way to appreciate your senior with your time and thoughtfulness.



### Spa Gift Certificate

A gift certificate to a spa or hotel is a nice way to encourage your loved one to pamper him- or herself. A Marriott gift certificate, for example, affords your loved one many choices when it comes to ways in which he or she can choose to relax.



### Jitterbug Cell Phone

The Jitterbug Phone is an easy-to-use cell phone, designed specifically for seniors. The displays are larger and easier to read and the buttons themselves are also larger and easier to press.



### Sabi Roam Cane

These attractive, wooden canes bring a little style to mobility support. The handle itself has an ergonomic, wide grip and the shaft is easy to clean. The Roam Cane will make your senior feel like a million bucks!



### PikStik Reacher

Many of our clients find the PikStik Reacher to be a useful device to help them grab hard to reach items. For individuals with limited mobility, this gift could help make basic tasks much easier.



### iPod Shuffle

Seniors love music and a great gift idea is to preload an iPod Shuffle with some of their favorite tunes to enjoy. A shuffle is light, easy-to use and holds hundreds of songs.

## Bringing the *Generations Together*

### **Explain the limitations of seniors to the younger children.**


Most older adults love being around the younger generations, but young children, toddlers and babies may not understand the limitations of their aging family members. Explain Grandma's mobility challenges, hearing impairment, or memory issues in advance so that children aren't intimidated or confused.

### **Encourage lifelong family traditions.**

The holidays present the opportunity to keep the traditions that started many generations ago alive! Set aside time to perform a traditional activity, eat a traditional meal or use traditional décor. Best yet, encourage the older adults to share stories behind the traditions in your family, empowering the younger generations to carry on the important family traditions as they grow old.

### **Share stories and look at photos from the past.**

Since times when family and friends gather together are rare, use the holidays as a time to go through old scrapbooks to look at photos, tell stories and recall past memories together.

A photograph of a family of three—a woman, a young girl, and an older man—gathered around a birthday cake. The woman is on the left, the girl is in the middle, and the man is on the right. They are all looking down at the cake with interest. The cake is decorated with lit candles and a gingerbread man figurine. The scene is warmly lit, suggesting a holiday or family gathering.

The holidays bring friends and family members of all ages together, which is why it is such a special time of year. However, there are some things to consider when bringing the generations together, especially if an aging senior is present.



# Caring for Dementia

## *Over the Holidays*

Although the holidays are a joyful time, for those caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia, this time of year comes with more challenges.



### **Plan plenty of time for rest.**

Since too much stimulation can be overwhelming to someone with dementia, plan to focus on only one or two activities and spend the rest of the day relaxing. Manage the expectations of others by informing them that you and your loved one cannot participate in everything.

### **Invite your loved one to perform easy tasks.**

It's good to involve a loved one with cognitive decline in holiday preparations and traditions, but assign them simple tasks. For example, if you are wrapping presents, have them hand you the gifts or paper instead of expecting them to wrap the whole present. Express gratitude for their effort.

### **For large gatherings, try name tags.**

It can be embarrassing for an older adult with memory impairment when they cannot recall someone's name. For larger gatherings, provide name tags to make it easier for the person with dementia.



### **At parties, organize group craft projects.**

It can be difficult for someone with dementia to carry on conversations all night. Group craft projects are a way to help them feel engaged, without feeling like they need to talk. Easy projects might include pasting shapes, coloring with the children or stringing popcorn.

### **Take care of yourself.**

Understand how difficult it can be to care for a loved one with dementia – especially during the holiday season. Reward yourself by engaging in an activity just for you, such as getting a manicure and pedicure or going to the movies with a friend. You can ask a loved one to take over your caregiving duties or hire respite care.

# Taking Care of *Yourself* and Respite Care

Remember, taking care of yourself is just as important as taking care of others!



## **Does caring for an aging loved one make it hard for you to take care of other responsibilities, including yourself?**

Many family caregivers would like time over the holidays to get things done, including holiday shopping, errands, or spending some time relaxing and catching up with friends, yet feel guilty leaving their loved one alone. What many people don't realize is that Home Care Assistance offers respite care in the form of highly skilled, compassionate caregivers. Our caregivers help provide you with a break so that you can have the "me time" that you need and deserve.



*Consider hiring help to support your aging loved one so you get the relief you deserve.*



## **What is Respite Care?**

Respite Care is temporary care to provide family caregivers relief from the full-time care they have been providing for a loved one. At Home Care Assistance, our services are contract-free and respite care can be arranged on a temporary basis with absolutely no obligation to continue using services in the future. Respite care services include light housekeeping, help with mobility, personal care, meal preparation, medication reminders, transportation to errands or appointments, and even companionship care to

keep the client company. Respite care is highly beneficial to family caregivers who are burning out and need a break. This is even more important over the busy holiday months. Caregiver burnout is all too real: between 40% of 70% of family caregivers experience clinically significant symptoms of depression and anxiety due to the emotional toll of caring for an aging parent. Be mindful of your own health and be comfortable hiring a Home Care Assistance caregiver to provide respite care for your loved one this holiday season.

## *Experts Tips* From Our Care Team



**Plan ahead** – Limit the number of activities your loved one is involved in. The noise and confusion of a large family can cause irritability or exhaustion.

**Stroll down memory lane** – The holidays provoke memories. Use family videos, pictures, and music to foster positive memories and emotions for your loved one. This can also promote brain health as the senior is pulling

from their short term and long term memory.

**Keep set schedules** – Your loved one might be used to waking up and going to sleep at a certain time. Try to stay on his or her schedule.

**Create new memories** – Enjoy activities such as driving to look at decorations or visiting friends and family.

Ask your loved one to help with tasks such as folding napkins or icing the cake.

–*Staci H., Home Care Liaison*

Consider fall hazards in your home when decorating. You and I might see the skirt around the tree or the strings of lights, but they can easily be missed by our loved ones.

–*Gracie L., Client Care Manager*

Think of new and easier ways to partake in each holiday's traditions without it being too overwhelming for seniors. Simplify where needed in order to accommodate those individuals!

–*Melanie O., Head of Operations*

Discover one of their favorite childhood memories revolving around the holidays and relive it! Whether it was threading popcorn, or brewing fresh hot apple cider, get festive and fun by taking a trip down memory lane.

–*Tonya M., Staffing Manager*



Be sure that with all the holiday activities and rich foods your loved one is hydrated. Dehydration can contribute to or be responsible for many conditions that in some cases are irreversible. Also, please be sure to plan activities the senior can engage in to the extent they are able. Often times, the elderly seniors in the crowd end up being observers rather than participants and it contributes to depressed mood and feelings of isolation and loneliness.

–*Cindy R., Staffing Assistant*

Big holiday celebrations can be overwhelming for seniors who are suffering from cognitive or hearing deficits. Instead of bringing them to a large open house full of noise and confusion, consider bringing them to a small group and giving them lots of love and attention in a comfortable environment.

–*Laurette F., Head of Operations*

Make sure to include your loved one in the holiday preparations and activities. This can be done by modifying activities they used to be able to do on their own. Always focus on your loved ones' strongest skill sets.

–*Anna M., Client Care Manager*

Don't assume mom or dad wants to be present for every part of the holiday celebrations. Sit down with them ahead of time to discuss how they would ideally like to spend their time with family.

–*Carmella M., Client Care Manager*

Some seniors might need reassurance that they will have a dependable person with them over the holidays. Family, friends and care providers should make plans ahead of time to ensure those seniors have someone there with them throughout the holidays. Many older adults don't want a lot of gifts or rich food. Instead, they place more value on companionship, having a good listener, and having the help they need to stick to their regular routine.

–*Kathryn F., Staffing Manager*

If you are caring for a loved one, the holiday season is your time to unwind as well, so don't be afraid to ask for help. For example, if you are hosting a party at your place, don't worry about perfection. Small things may not go as planned, but they will not be noticed by others, only yourself. Accept or ask for help.

–*Chandeeep S., Client Care Manager*

It's easy to decide to skip celebrating holiday traditions with senior loved ones, but they really appreciate the effort, even the small things.

–*Jill C., Head of Operations*



Be sure to include the seniors in holiday planning and preparation. Planning menus, wrapping gifts, baking and decorating are a few ways to be sure they participate. Also be mindful of their physical limitations when thinking of activities to do together.

–*Jeff S., General Manager*

Keep your senior loved one well rested and make sure he or she consumes a lot of vitamin C as germs spread easily during the holiday season!

–*Ani S., Head of Operations*

Enjoy the holiday season fun and activities together, but remember to take time for simple connections, quiet moments and cheer throughout the year as well.

–*Francie B., Client Care Manager*

Remember that a thoughtful gift means much more than anything material, especially in the golden years. My favorite gift idea is the Happiness Jar. I like to encourage family members to get everyone in the extended family to write a funny memory, a personal note, or print a funny picture and put each in an individual envelope. Then put all of the notes in a jar so that your loved one can take one out whenever he or she wants.

–*Michael L., Home Care Liaison*

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# About

## Home Care Assistance

At Home Care Assistance, we provide customized care to older adults so they can live happier, healthier lives at home. We champion the needs of seniors with a positive, empowering approach to aging that celebrates independence, dignity and quality of life. Our caregivers receive exceptional training, support and resources to deliver an unmatched care experience.

### High Quality Care

We go above and beyond to deliver concierge-level care for clients who want, and expect, the very best for their aging loved ones.

### Committed to Our Clients

We believe the best way to deliver exceptional care is to focus on building long-term, trusting relationships between caregivers, seniors and their families.

### Elevated Quality of Life

Our Balanced Care Method™ emphasizes healthy mind, body and spirit. We believe that with the proper care, we can help older family members live happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives.

### Trusted Care Expertise

We are experts in all aspects of home care, from family dynamics to nutrition, around-the-clock care to dementia. And we train our caregivers accordingly.

### Total Peace of Mind

We understand the trust you place in us, and do everything possible to ensure that the home care experience is worry-free for all concerned.

### Connected in the Community

We are the trusted partner of reputable care professionals in the communities we serve. We pride ourselves on connecting our clients to the care solutions they need - even if it's outside our service offerings.



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