

8 ways you can support a loved one with dementia this Christmas



While the festive season is a time of joy and connection, it can also bring challenges for those impacted by dementia.

There is the mental strain of additional socialising – either with visitors in your home, or out and about at Christmas events. It can also be difficult to adjust to changes in your usual routine or new and vibrant decorations around the house.

The good news is that, with a bit of planning and flexibility, your Christmas celebrations can still be fun, memorable, and extra special. Here are eight ways you can support your loved one with dementia over the Christmas period

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1. Keep your decorations simple

For people living with dementia, the addition of bright, glittery decorations can be confusing and disorientating – particularly if they rely on specific markers to find their way around the home.

Be mindful of this by keeping decorations simple and putting them up one at a time over a few weeks so your loved one can adjust slowly. They might even like to be involved in the decorating process – it not only encourages their independence but is also a lovely way to connect.

You might have decorations that have been in the family for a long time and are familiar to your loved one – these can provide an excellent opportunity to reminisce and share memories.

2. Have a plan for Christmas Day or other special events

There is an old truism – preparation is key to success. While you may not be able to control the day's outcome, having a clear plan on how your loved one will be cared for throughout your celebration will help you feel more relaxed.

Your plan might include:

- *When your loved one will need to take their medications throughout the day*
- *If your loved one lives in a residential aged care home, what time you will pick them up and drop them back. Remember to share your plans with the care team so they can support you!*
- *Booking a wheelchair or an accessible taxi in advance*
- *Preparing for any incontinence issues your loved one may experience during the day and ensure there are adequate measures in place to avoid accidents. Discuss the best way to manage this with your family member's healthcare team in advance.*

3. Create a quiet and peaceful environment



If you're expecting many guests over Christmas, consider spreading the visits out over the festive period so your loved one doesn't become overwhelmed with everybody arriving at once.

If a large group is unavoidable, create a quiet, peaceful space where your loved one can retreat if they feel stressed or agitated.

4. Maintain realistic expectations

Maintain realistic expectations of your loved one - and yourself! For example, don't take it too personally if they don't seem to appreciate the efforts you've gone to or if they don't look like they're enjoying themselves.

Sometimes, your loved one might get fulfilment simply from watching what's happening.

Try to stay calm throughout the event - and enjoy it! Be relaxed in the knowledge that you've done everything you can to ensure the event is a success, and even if it doesn't go entirely according to plan – it's unlikely the consequences will be dire.

5. Take time to reminisce

Try to include your loved one in the activities to their level of ability. You could play their favourite music to help them remember old times or talk to them about past celebrations and traditions they used to enjoy.

6. Keep your plans flexible

Be ready to change your plans if you need to. Prepare a plan B, and maybe a plan C.

Even when you've prepared everything down to the last detail, and your loved one has said they are happy with the plans, circumstances can change quickly, and you may see changes in their behaviour.

If this happens, remain calm, and source the trigger. Respond appropriately and try not to take it personally.

7. Seek support

The festive period is such a busy time, but when you're caring for someone, there is added pressure. It's important to build your support network and plan time to rest and be refreshed.

Day and overnight respite care

If your loved one is living at home, consider [booking respite care](#) at one of [our social clubs](#) or at one of our cottage respite facilities in [Sydney](#) or in [Wagga Wagga](#).

These small social groups offer a program of engaging activities for those with dementia while providing quality care by trained staff. At Christmas, in particular, all kinds of great activities are going on to keep the group busy!

If you're looking for a longer period of care, [residential care homes](#) often offer short-term respite too. This includes high-level, round-the-clock assistance with everyday tasks such as washing and dressing, cooking, and continence management. Residential respite care is heavily subsidised, making it one of

the most affordable respite options for seniors. You can browse BaptistCare’s aged care home locations [here](#).

Emotional support

Managing dementia around Christmas and celebratory events can often trigger a deep sense of loss in the person with dementia, as well as for you and your family. Be prepared for this and seek emotional support as you navigate these feelings.

8. Create your family ‘care team.’



Enlist the help of family and friends to support you and your loved one during your celebration. Consider assigning specific roles to people so everyone knows what they are doing, for example:

- *Providing assistance at mealtimes*
- *Spending time with your loved one in their retreat area*
- *Reminding your loved one to take their medication*

The great thing about spending time with family and friends at this time of year is that more support is often available to you – don't be afraid to draw on this.

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Our dedicated team of over 5,900 staff and 600 volunteers are committed to transforming lives, seeing every individual live well through our wide range of services, including [residential aged care](#) and [BaptistCare at home](#).

Whatever your care needs, we'd love to talk with you and discuss how we can help.

Our friendly team can be reached on 1800 260 667. Alternatively, click the link below to learn more about BaptistCare's

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