

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

11/26/2010

FOR FAMILY MEMBERS WITH ALZHEIMER'S, THESE TIPS CAN MAKE THE HOLIDAYS EASIER FOR EVERYONE.

Alzheimer's disease affects every aspect of a family's life and the holidays are no exception. The holidays are a busy time of visiting with friends and family, shopping in crowded stores and rushing to find enough hours in the day to complete everything on your "To Do" list.

For many people with Dementia, the changes in environment, crowded stores and rush on time cause anxiety. Caregiver's know best what their loved one with Dementia is capable of – and what agitates and upsets them. Resist the pressures to celebrate the holidays as others expect you to. No one can control the progression of the disease - or take away all of the anxiety of the season. But by planning and setting firm boundaries, you can avoid needless holiday stress and enjoy the warmth of the season. Lara Williams, Executive Director of Belfair Gardens, an assisted-living community in Bluffton, SC for people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia offers these holiday tips:

***Celebrate in familiar surroundings:** Consider holding a holiday celebration where your loved one with memory loss lives. The familiarity of the environment gives them a safe feeling they need to help lessen the anxiety.

***Keep the gatherings small:** Have family and friends schedule holiday get together's throughout the month so they can visit in a smaller group rather than

one or two large family gatherings during the holiday. Even if your loved one is not sure who's who, two or three familiar faces are likely to be welcome while nine or ten may be overwhelming

***Schedule visits and outings at your loved ones best time of day:** People with any form of Dementia tend to tire more easily with the stress of daily life causing them to be more anxious and irritable in the late afternoon. To help with this, your loved one may appreciate morning or lunchtime gatherings and outings. This will allow you all to enjoy the holiday hustle and bustle.

Ms. Williams says:

“As Alzheimer’s progresses, a person’s senses – smell, taste, hearing -- heighten”. “The remote memory stays intact. Smelling the Christmas tree or homemade cookies will bring back memories. Give them this opportunity to use what capabilities they have left by setting aside time for them to reminisce while decorating the tree or baking cookies.”

Other tips include being selective on what holiday traditions and activities are most important. Remember that you cannot do it all so focus on what you both enjoy. Delegating to family members and friends will lessen your holiday stress as well as letting them have the opportunity to show you their support. Their spending a few hours with your loved one while you run errands or even better – attend a holiday party is important to make sure that you are also remembering to care for yourself.

Belfair Gardens is located at 60 Oak Forest Road Bluffton, SC 29910.

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