

It is normal for carers to feel overwhelmed trying to maintain festive traditions and become hesitant in engaging in some celebrations for fear that others may react negatively. Set firm boundaries and expectations as you can't control the progression of dementia or protect the person living with dementia from the distress or confusion that may occur. You can, however, prepare yourself and family/friends. **Give yourself permission to enjoy celebrations.**

Tips To Support You Through This Time

- Celebrate over lunch or brunch, rather than an evening meal.
- Do not do everything yourself, either arrange to celebrate at a different house or ask guests to bring a plate of food.
- Set aside 'letting go' time and acknowledge your grief, it's natural and normal.
- Talk about dementia. Sometimes people can be reluctant to mention the changes because they don't know how to raise the subject and/or they don't want to upset you. It is important that people understand your role, your life and what is happening to the person living with dementia. Break the ice by bringing it up yourself.
- Ensure activities are safe and manageable.
- As much as possible keep routines normal to manage confusion.
- Find a balance between daily activities, festive planning, and adequate rest.
- Festive gatherings may be a trigger and lead to increased confusion, frustration, and agitation, and the person may not be able to tell you they are overwhelmed or need a rest, so, the frustration they are experiencing may be exhibited through behaviours.

To minimise unsettling behaviours, try to avoid:

- Large crowds with too many loud conversations and music all at once.
- Light that is either too bright or too dark.
- Overindulgence in rich foods or drinks (including alcohol)
- Changes to regular routines.

Preparing Family/Friends

- Ensure family/friends are aware the person is living with dementia and may not remember you and ask the same questions repeatedly while displaying some unusual behaviours (give some examples of what may occur).
- Emphasise the significance of the time spent together and reiterate that the person still needs and enjoys conversation, laughter, and eye contact even if it is difficult for them to articulate responses.