

Tips for Successful Social Occasions.

- Accept the person living with dementia has special needs and make allowances for this.
- Make a conscious effort to work with the person as a successful outcome depends on your attitude, given we can't change the person, only our responses.
- Set the scene before the celebration. Invite the person to the celebration and replace the phrase "Would you like to....?" with "I would like to invite you to....."
- In crowded situations, ensure you communicate with the person and remember to regularly explain what is going on. (to help eliminate the person feeling lost and overwhelmed) Avoid speaking over them or whispering, as this has the potential to increase agitation.
- Where possible ask the person to help as any job will boost their self-esteem. (always remember to thank them). A person in the early stage of dementia may still be able to do set the table with a model to copy. A person in later stage may require a less complicated job, and more direction such as placing pre-folded serviettes on each plate.
- Often singing familiar songs together while working creates positive outcomes.
- Be mindful of making the person feel special.
- If agitation is increased by loud, unexpected noises, avoid party poppers and bon bons.
- At the dining table, place the most patient person next to the person, so they may help them to understand what is being said and what is happening around them.
- Sometimes the best way to avoid agitated behaviours may be to either halve the number of planned activities or increase the time allotted to each activity. When handing out gifts, give them out one by one and allow the person time to open each gift and enjoy it.
- If children are part of your celebration, it may prove helpful to ensure the person living with dementia is also made to feel special. It is also important to ensure that the person does not become overwhelmed by the attention of too many children at once.

A final note:

Discuss with family members and friends any special needs and what to be aware of regarding the person living with dementia. Are there particular 'buttons' they should avoid pressing such as telling off, reprimanding, correcting etc?

