

Creating Memorable Social Occasions

- Be open with your family and friends. Try to be organised and prepare people, so everyone experiences positive outcomes.
- Think about whether it may prove beneficial to leave mentioning outings until the last minute, or would it be better to give information regularly prior to the event.
- When it comes to seating arrangements, ensure the person living with dementia has their usual chair if in a familiar environment.
- Take the persons usual cutlery, plate, and cups so there is some familiarity.
- Recognise and accept that the person may not remember the people around them.
- It may be helpful to say, "We haven't seen each other in such a long time." Ask people prior to social occasions to greet the person by saying something like "I'm your nephew John; it's been a while since I've seen you."
- Try not to correct the person if they get people's names incorrect or say something that isn't true – this can lead to distress and frustration on all sides.
- If you observe an increase in agitation, try to change the subject, sing a favourite song, or take yourselves to another room for a few minutes before coming back in calmly.
- Prior to occasions ask people to look the person in the eye and smile.
- If the person refers to someone as their mother, try starting a conversation about their mother, e.g. what they miss about her or what her favourite sayings were.
- Seat yourself where they can see you and avoid sudden movements from the side.
- *Involving Children* - Explain as clearly as possible, at a level that the child can understand. Get a sense of how much detail they can cope with and reassure them their feelings are normal. Talk about behaviour of the person e.g. if they are forgetting where they are, or acting in a strange manner. Reassure them they can speak to you without being judged.

Tips for Your Friends/Family to Help Them Interact Positively.

- Let visitors/family/friends know they should "go with the flow".
- Ask them to speak softly, but loud enough to be heard.
- Talk slowly and avoid slang phrases.
- Not to respond angrily should there be an emotional outburst.
- Maintain eye contact during conversations.
- Identify the person by name.
- Not to become annoyed should they have to repeat what has been said.
- Use common words or phrases.
- Be prepared for periods of confusion.
- Look interested in what is being said.