



HAS CARING FOR SOMEONE WITH DEMENTIA MADE YOU DREAD THE CHRISTMAS SEASON?

Has caring for someone  
with  
**DEMENTIA**  
made you dread the Christmas season?

Here are 9 easy to implement strategies to bring  
more joy and less guilt into this busy family time!

Cynthia (Cyn) Dunn  
CLSC, CDP, CPCA



Bon Natale Streken Bozhik Frohe Weihnachten Mata-Ki-te-Rangi  
Craciun fericit Nabida **merry christmas** God Jul  
Nollick ghennal Baas Festas Shub Naya Baras Mele Kalikimaka  
feliz navidad! Vrolijk Kerstfeest  
Joyeux Noel

The "most wonderful time of the year" brings with it memories and mixed emotions that can be especially tough on already stressed caregivers, but I don't need to tell you that! We at Choice believe that too, so here are some practical tips to make holidays more enjoyable for you and your loved one with Dementia.

At a time when you believe you should be happy, you could instead find that stress, disappointment and sadness prevail. You might also feel pressure to keep up family traditions, despite the demands caregiving places on your time and energy.

**I wrote this for you, because I am not only the owner of Choice Dementia I've been where you are.**

My dad was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2001 and at the beginning it wasn't too bad at all. At first it was just a word here or there then it went on to not being able to stay in a conversation, then it was a matter of judgement and safety and he lost his drivers license. Then he didn't know my name.

As the disease progressed the changes in my dad were scary and mortifying: who would have thought a daughter would be changing the personal undergarments of her dad? This strong gentle man who had the answer to all my questions all my life, was floundering and so upset with himself that we were both brought to tears many times. The disease robbed me of this great man, without so much as a by your leave. Some days I was so angry, sad, and scared of doing or saying the wrong thing, and so overwhelmed. I know I am not alone with my feelings. I have dedicated myself to being there for the caregivers and their families because I know all too well what it means, and the consequences of doing it alone.

**It is a fact that by doing it all alone you put your health and well being at high risk, if you had a heart attack who then would look after your loved one?**

As a caregiver, it isn't realistic to expect that you will have the time or the energy to participate in all the holiday activities as you once did. Yet, by adjusting your expectations and modifying some traditions, you can still find meaning and joy for you and your family. However, if you'd like more support, please call me directly at **778.231.3130** for a 20-minute complimentary talk to see if we are a fit. I would love to help you out over the holidays, allow us to come in while you and the family go out to a party, dinner, church, caroling or sleigh rides, the things you all enjoy and your loved one can't handle anymore because of either Alzheimer's or a related Dementia.

Read on for my simple, yet easy tips to bring less stress and more joy into your holiday season!

## Keep it simple at home

If you're caring for a loved one who has Alzheimer's at home:

- **Make preparations together.** If you bake, your loved one might be able to participate by stirring batter or rolling dough. You might find it meaningful to open holiday cards together. Concentrate on the doing rather than the result.
- **Tone down your decorations.** Blinking lights and large decorative displays can cause disorientation. Avoid lighted candles and other safety hazards, as well as decorations that could be mistaken for edible treats — such as artificial fruits.
- **Host quiet, slow-paced gatherings.** Holiday gatherings often involve music and loud conversation. Yet for a person who has Alzheimer's, a calm and quiet environment usually is best. Keep daily routines in place as much as possible and, as needed, provide your loved one a place to rest during family get-togethers.

## Be practical away from home

If your loved one lives in a nursing home or other facility:

- **Celebrate in the most familiar setting.** For many people who have Alzheimer's, a change of environment — even a visit home — can cause anxiety. To avoid disruption, consider holding a small family celebration at the facility. You might also participate in holiday activities planned for the residents.
- **Minimize visitor traffic.** Arrange for a few family members to drop in on different days. Even if your loved one isn't sure who's who, two or three familiar faces are likely to be welcome. A large group, however, might be overwhelming.
- **Schedule visits at your loved one's best time of day.** Schedule your small gathering during that time.

## Manage expectations

To manage expectations during the holidays:

- **Pick and choose.** Decide which holiday activities and traditions are most important, and focus on those you enjoy. Remember that you can't do it all.
- **Prepare family members.** If you have family coming in from out of town, update them on your loved one's status ahead of time so they know what to expect.
- **Delegate.** Remember family and friends who've offered their assistance. Let them help with cleaning, addressing cards and shopping for gifts.

## Trust your instincts

As a caregiver, you know your loved one's abilities best. You also know what's most likely to agitate or upset him or her. Resist pressure to celebrate the way others might expect you to. You can't control the progress of Alzheimer's or protect your loved one from all distress — but by planning and setting firm boundaries you can avoid needless holiday stress and enjoy the warmth of the season.

However, if you'd like more support, please call me directly at 778.231.3130 for a 20-minute complimentary talk to see if we are a fit.

Thank you for reading my suggestions, and now, I'd like you to meet my dad, Dev. I love and miss you Dad.



Cynthia (Cyn) Dunn CLSC, CDP, CPCA

Founder | CEO

Direct line: [778.231.3130](tel:778.231.3130)

[www.choicedementia.ca](http://www.choicedementia.ca)

**In-Home Caregiver Respite & Advocacy**