

## PEACE & JOY: Holiday Tips for Caregivers

PROVIDED BY AMAZING PLACE PROGRAM DIRECTOR  
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**H**olidays remind us of good times: fresh-cut trees with twinkling lights, freshly baked sugar cookies, roasting turkeys and laughing friends and family members who have changed since we last saw them. Time-honored outings to church or a synagogue offer hope and purpose.

Expectations for the season tend to run high causing stress for anyone. Caregivers and those they care for with memory loss tend to experience additional stress due to real or anticipated changes in the care recipients. Caregivers worry about holiday obligations and visiting family members with well-intended but not so helpful advice.

*Following are some tips suggested by Carrie Hill, Ph.D.  
(About.com Alzheimer's Disease) to help caregivers find  
peace and joy during holidays.*

- **Prepare your family for the holiday gatherings.** Arrange for a telephone conversation with those who will be visiting. Describe in plain terms how their relative with dementia has changed since they last visited, both physically and behaviorally. If a telephone call is not an option, consider sending a letter with a current picture along with helpful articles about Alzheimer's.
- **Give yourself permission to ask for help and adapt traditions.** It is okay to ask for help with dinner and putting up the tree. If it is too much to host the holiday gathering, it is okay to change the tradition.
- **Get feedback from your family after the holidays.** Prior to visits, ask that all discussions about the care recipient be delayed until after the holidays. Advise them that you would appreciate their thoughts, ideas and suggestions at a later time.

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Faith Brock has a master's degree in social work from the University of Houston and a master's degree in healthcare administration from Texas Women's University. A Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Certified Case Manager, Faith has over 20 years of experience in assisting older adults with memory loss and their families in the continuum of care: clinics, adult day center, nursing home, assisted living.

As the Program Director at Amazing Place, Faith promotes meaningful activities and friendships for participants and recognizes the importance of respite and support for caregivers. A speaker at national and local conferences, she has shared the benefits of day programs for participants with early to moderate memory loss and respite for caregivers.

Faith has served on the Advisory Committee of the Graduate School of Healthcare Administration, TWU and has been a field instructor for the Graduate College of Social Work, University of Houston. In 2006, Faith served as one of 50 delegates in the field of aging to the first U.S. - China Joint Social Work Conference in Beijing, China sponsored by People to People Ambassador Program and NASW. She is a long time volunteer for the Alzheimer's Association and is past president of College Women's Club Houston. Faith enjoys spending time with her family: husband, Rick and their collie, LuLu.

## Holiday Tips for Caregivers... *Continued from front page*

- **Lean on people who understand.** If your family seems unsympathetic towards your caregiving situation, it often means they do not understand what you are going through. Reach out to others who do understand, such as members of a local support group. You are not alone.
- **Take care of yourself.** Make sure you get enough sleep, exercise and proper nutrition. By caring for your body as well as your emotional well-being, you will be well-prepared to handle the stress that can accompany holiday gatherings.
- **Obtain respite care.** Remember to find time for yourself and discover ways to find joy and peace in your life.
- **Schedule some one-to-one time with the care recipient in a relaxed setting.** Look through photo albums, or unpack ornaments together.
- **Accept the need to adapt.** Modify time away from home to fit the needs of the care recipient. Have another room in the house designed as a quiet place so that the care recipient is not over stimulated or wearied by holiday visits.
- **Should you experience signs and symptoms of depression, i.e. sadness and tearfulness for two weeks or longer, see your physician.** Depression is highly treatable. Visiting with a psychologist or clergy can offer additional support.

*Additional education and support during the holidays is available through the Alzheimer's Association: 713.266.6400; [www.alz.org/texas](http://www.alz.org/texas).*

## Holiday Inspiration

*"My idea of Christmas, whether old-fashioned or modern, is very simple: loving others. Come to think of it, why do we have to wait for Christmas to do that?" — Bob Hope*

*"What is Christmas? It is tenderness for the past, courage for the present, hope for the future. It is a fervent wish that every cup may overflow with blessings rich and eternal, and that every path may lead to peace." — Agnes M. Pharo*

Father God, Fill our hearts with your spirit so that we may live today in gratitude and grace.

**A candle is a small thing.  
But one candle can light another.  
And see how its own light increases,  
as a candle gives its flame to the other.  
You are such a light.**

— Moshe Davis and Victor Ratner



Pictured L-R: Faith Brock, LCSW with Amazing Place participant and spouse, and Lisa Lipscomb RN