

Surviving Holiday Stress When Caring for Someone with Dementia

Day Haven Adult Day Services offers the following tips to families caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or a related dementia during the Holiday Season:

- 1- Be honest with family members and friends about your loved one's disease. Let them know what to expect before they visit.
- 2- As much as possible, plan visits for early in the day. Being respectful of your loved one's routine during the holidays may prevent symptoms of sun-downing or fatigue.
- 3- Adjust your expectations. Your house doesn't have to be the most decorated nor do you have to be the host of the holiday dinner.
- 4- Give yourself a break. Maybe you can attend that holiday event alone while leaving your loved one with a well-informed friend, relative, or hired attendant.
- 5- Finding some alone time for some deep breathing, meditation or light exercise may help you relieve stress.
- 6- Connect with "holidays past." Old photos, watching movies, listening to songs are a good way to share a lifetime of good memories with your loved one.
- 7- Be honest with yourself. It is okay to feel sad during the holidays. Finding a friend or another caregiver who understands how you feel can be a huge support to you.
- 8- Try to involve the person with dementia as much as possible. Decorating the house, helping to wrap gifts or mixing the cookie dough are meaningful activities that will help your loved one feel useful.
- 9- Encourage people to purchase useful gifts for you. Gift cards to restaurants, laundry service, or a cleaning service may be more meaningful and helpful to you than a more traditional gift.
- 10- Connect with other caregivers. Joining a support group is a good way to meet other caregivers in your community.

Day Haven, an adult day services program in Port Jefferson and Ronkonkoma, provides day time care, therapeutic recreation, opportunities for socialization, and meals for frail older adults and individuals with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. The trained and professional staff is available, Monday – Friday, 8:00a.m. – 5:00p.m., to discuss your family's needs. Call Ethel at (631) 476-9698 for more information.

If you are a caregiver of someone with Alzheimer's or a related dementia, the following organizations can further support you during the holidays and all year long:

- Alzheimer's Association, (800) 272-3900, www.alz.org
- Alzheimer's Disease Assistance Center, (631) 444-1365, www.stonybrookmedicalcenter.org/alzheimers
- Alzheimer's Foundation, (866) AFA-8484, www.alzfdn.org
- Long Island Alzheimer's Foundation, (631) 767-6856, www.liaf.org