

Care Partner Support Group Newsletter

Supporting Families. Empowering Caregivers

=====S. Parker=====Program Coordinator

November/December 2025

‘Caring for a person with dementia can be all-consuming’

When Tracey Clayton's aunt was diagnosed with dementia she went through stages of denial and confusion. Now, she explains what she learned along the way.

Tracey Clayton
05 December 2017



Tracey was the primary caregiver for her aunt for nine years. When a person who is dear to you first experiences memory problems, you will probably look for a rational explanation. After my aunt first forgot about our lunch appointment, I thought it happened because she was distracted.

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/blog/traceys-story-caring-person-dementia-can-be-all-consuming>
<https://www.alz.org/news/2024/november-national-family-caregivers-month#:~:text=%E2%80%94During%20National%20Family%20Caregivers%20and%20National%20Alzheimer%E2%80%99s,demands%20and%20stresses%20of%20caring%20for%20someone%20else.>

When the same thing happened for the second time, it became weird. But when she left home with the stove still burning, that's when my alarm bell really started ringing. I decided to finally take her to the doctor.

First came denial

Once the results were in, I was shocked and terrified about what stood in front of us. The doctor's words sounded so chaotic in my head when she talked about Alzheimer's Disease, its symptoms, progression and the need for constant care. When I came home, I decided to read as much as I could about this condition.

Caring for a person with some form of dementia or Alzheimer's can be all-consuming. It requires a lot of your time, dedication and patience. This only gets worse with time, as my aunt's functional, physical and cognitive abilities began to diminish.

You need to be prepared to experience high levels of stress and even depression, because seeing someone you love in that condition, and neglecting your own health and

personal life to provide them with care can be overwhelming. Your loved one will sometimes behave as an entirely different person, and that can be very painful. That's why it is important for you to have support too, in the form of family members, a partner, a friend, or even support groups.

Overcoming the challenges



Taking care of a person with Alzheimer's disease or dementia brings many challenges that develop alongside the condition. There isn't a universal path to follow, each person's condition progresses differently. It can help to prepare, but there's always a new challenge to tackle.

With my aunt I overcame communication troubles by using simple words and trying to get her to focus before I spoke. Bladder troubles were difficult too, but after we established a routine of taking her to the bathroom it became easier.

The hallucinations and delusions were the worst part of the experience, but it is important to try not to argue. Sudden changes in mood and outbursts of aggression need extreme patience and understanding.

A life-changing experience

The most important aspect of providing care is keeping your loved one safe and limiting their chances of wandering off. I gave my

aunt an identification with address and phone number, and I kept the main doors locked, especially during the night.

I had been the primary caregiver for my aunt who lived with Alzheimer's for nine years and watched her fade away bit by bit. Needless to say, this was incredibly difficult for me, but I always tried to remember that it is difficult for her too.

It's essential to know that you won't come out of this experience the same as you were when you went into it. But if you don't let the disease consume you, the fact that you were kind and good to a person you love in such difficult times should be a sufficient reward.

Dementia Caregivers Make Your Health and Well-Being an Equal Priority

November is National Family Caregivers and National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month

As difficult as it may be, caregivers need to make their health and well-being an equal priority "Maintaining your health can help you be a better caregiver. No caregiver should face this disease alone. Caring for those living with Alzheimer's or other dementia poses special challenges for family caregivers. As dementia symptoms worsen, caregivers can experience increased emotional stress, depression, anxiety, and new or worsened health problems.

Caregivers balance competing priorities while supporting their overall health and well-being Tips:

- **Find time for yourself.** It's normal to need a break from caregiving duties. No one can do it all by themselves. Consider taking advantage of respite care or help from family and friends to spend time doing something you enjoy. While the person with dementia can do things they enjoy.
- **Become an educated caregiver.** Understand the disease, its progression and accompanying behavioral and physical changes. Know resources in your community that can help.
- **Build a support network.** Organize friends and family who want to help provide care and support. Access local caregiver support groups or online communities, to connect with other caregivers. If someone offers help, take them up on it. If stress becomes overwhelming, seek professional help.
- **Take care of yourself.** Try to eat well, exercise and get plenty of rest. Making sure that you are healthy can help you be a better caregiver.
- **Avoid caregiver burnout.** Sustained caregiver stress can lead to caregiver burnout – a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion.
- **Accept changes.** Eventually your loved one will need more intensive kinds of care. Research care options now so you are ready for the changes as they occur.
- **Know you're doing your best.** It's normal to lose patience or feel like your care may fall short sometimes. You're doing the best you can.
- **"It's important that dementia caregivers not do it alone,"** In the end, taking care of yourself is really a gift to the person you are caring for."

December Support Group Meetings

In-Person Meeting

12.12.25 Denham Springs 12pm
12.11.25 Greenwell Springs 11am
12.8.25 First Baptist, Zachary 12pm
12.8.25 Gonzales 1:30 pm
12.15.25 Parkview Baptist 1pm
12.15.25 New Roads 4pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting

12.2.25 Alzheimer's Services 10 AM
12.12.25 In the Beginning 2:30 PM
12.16.25 PM Support Group 7 PM

Facilitator:

Shyrell Parker, Program Coordinator
Alzheimer's Services
(225) 408-3101



Reminder!

12.12.25

Denham Springs 12pm



Community Outreach





Brain teaser

CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD PUZZLE

USE THE CLUES TO COMPLETE THE CROSSWORD PUZZLE.

Across

1. One of Santa's Reindeer
3. Santa's Helpers
5. December 25th is _____.
7. Christmas Drink
10. The name of a popular snowman.

Down

2. Christmas Month
4. He hates Christmas!
6. You hang them by the chimney.
8. On Christmas morning we unwrap our _____.
9. _____ to the world!

WWW.THRIFTYMMMASTIPS.COM

9 Ways to Create a Dementia Friendly Christmas For Your Loved One



Christmas is no doubt a magical time of year, but it can be tough for anyone living with dementia - including people in dementia care homes and those living at home. Losing a familiar routine, family visits and the pressure to have the perfect celebrations can quickly cause you and your loved one with dementia to feel overwhelmed.

With over 900,000 people living with dementia in the UK, more people than ever before are searching for dementia support in the run-up to Christmas.

Here, we've explored ways to lovingly care for someone with dementia at Christmas, along with different ways to have a dementia friendly Christmas - including dementia-friendly gifts!

1. Swap the TV for music

For some people living with dementia, watching television can be difficult, as they may struggle with storylines. Create a dementia friendly Christmas by swapping

<https://www.newsbreak.com/brproud-1590545/4015842463333-new-alzheimer-s-support-center-charlie-s-place-to-open-in-baker>
[Tips for People with Dementia](#)
[101 Brain Teasers for Adults \(With Answers\) - Parade](#)
[9 Ways To Create a Dementia Friendly Christmas | Lottie](#)

out the TV for the radio – or by playing a specially-curated dementia-friendly playlist – as it can be easier to follow.

Music therapy is increasingly becoming a key part of dementia care as it can enhance your loved one's life, enabling them to express themselves creatively while providing a shared experience for families.

2. Put any decorations up gradually

A change in routine and losing familiar surroundings can sometimes be tough for anyone living with dementia. Put your decorations up over a few days to ease your loved one into their new environment. This gradual approach can help them familiarize themselves at their own pace.

Scents can be a great way of evoking memories of the past – think about swapping some of your usual decorations for scented decorations. Oranges and spices could help them to reminisce.

Most importantly, don't place any pressure on your loved one to think about the past. It should come naturally, in a calm and stress-free environment.

Avoid saying '*remember when...*' to try and jog their memory. Instead, you can talk more openly about the past and lead the conversation. A more suitable and calm approach would be '*I remember when...*', as this can ease them into an open conversation where they can join in if they feel comfortable.

3. Change your routine beforehand

Christmas Day is often the busiest day of the year! From unwrapping gifts to cooking food, it represents a huge change to our everyday routines. You don't have to avoid your usual Christmas Day fun though. Communicating clearly and calmly will help with the transition to a new routine.

Firstly, introduce one new change every couple of days to smooth out the transition, rather than letting it happen all at once.

With each change, remember to talk about it before and after it happens. It's not just a good idea to prepare your loved one ahead of the change, but also to review the change after it's happened to keep in their mind this change has occurred. Doing this gradually will help create the sense of a new, familiar routine.

If your loved one is leaving familiar surroundings over Christmas, make sure this is clearly communicated beforehand. When you travel with your loved one, give

yourself plenty of time, as this can ease any caregiver stress.

4. Be mindful of food

When plating up any Christmas food, be mindful that a full plate can be daunting, especially for those who have difficulties eating. Avoid overloading your loved one's plate – and most importantly – don't rush them. Keep calm and ensure they have enough time to eat.

Sharing your loved one's festive food likes and dislikes with close friends and family members can really help tailor their meals. Remember, although people with dementia don't need a special diet, elderly nutrition is important, and you should still aim to serve things they'll enjoy. By understanding a person with dementia's preferences, you can support them to eat and drink in a way they'll enjoy.

5. Avoid talking differently

Although no harm is intended, sometimes you may find that you speak differently to your loved one with dementia. Speaking in a childlike tone can come across as patronizing and demeaning, and may leave your loved one feeling irritated, overwhelmed or anxious.

Remember, your loved one deserves dignity and respect. Every person's experience of dementia is unique, so make sure they feel as comfortable as possible. Communicate clearly and calmly, use simple sentences and take the time to listen to their response.

6. Buy dementia-friendly gifts

We've rounded up the best present ideas and dementia-friendly products for your loved one with dementia:

- Photo frames
- Low-maintenance plants
- Coloring and activity books
- A dementia radio (these are highly accessible, with a straightforward control panel, large buttons and color contrast)
- Relaxation sets (such as scented candles, aromatherapy diffusers and fragranced wheat bags)
- Music players (to further help with reminiscence, much like through reminiscence therapy)
- Hobby subscription services (from micro-gardening subscription sets to craft kits and tasting subscriptions, the options here are nearly endless)

Or any other nostalgia-inducing items you can think of.

7. Spend time with your loved one at their care home

If your loved one is unable to leave their care home due to illness, a long-term condition or through personal choice, many care homes welcome family members to join residents on this most special of days. Often, you'll be able to enjoy a delicious festive feast, while dedicated activity coordinators will organize traditional entertainment. Be sure to ring up beforehand to arrange your visit.

8. Writing and sending Christmas cards

If your loved one with dementia has always diligently sent out Christmas cards, they may want this to continue. Many care homes throughout the country encourage residents and their families to sit down and write cards together, to create a dementia friendly Christmas.

9. Create an amazing Christmas tree

Decorating a Christmas tree is an especially important Christmas tradition for many people, and dementia residents are no different. Often, family members are invited to their loved ones' care home, where they can get involved with creating a magical Christmas environment.

Why Is Creating a Dementia-Friendly Christmas Important?

Our new research has found that over the last 12 months, online searches for terms relating to dementia friendly Christmas, dementia at Christmas and dementia Christmas activities have surged:

Creating a dementia-friendly Christmas is important as it allows everyone to enjoy the day and the festivities surrounding it.

Research by the Alzheimer's Society has shown that over 50% of people affected by dementia find Christmas to be the most isolating time of year. By creating a dementia-friendly Christmas, you can go a long way to remove these barriers and ensuring everyone has an amazing time.

Caring For Someone with Dementia at Christmas

Millions of families across the UK will have someone with dementia join their Christmas celebrations. Caring for someone with dementia can often be a challenging experience, but there's no reason this should add any further pressure.

Christmas is an incredibly important time of year for everyone. It's understandable to feel anxious about making sure everyone is happy – especially someone who has dementia – but there are lots of ways to make your festive fun dementia-friendly.

Often, the best part of your loved one's day is spending time with you. Although it can be a challenge and feel overwhelming, it's so important to spend time together. Feelings evoked from relaxing and having fun together can shape the rest of their day. Your family visits have more lasting power than you think and can influence how they feel.

Remember: even if it's a slower pace than what you're used to, you're making memories together. It's equally important to support yourself, as looking after someone with dementia can feel overwhelming. Open up to your close friends and family if you're struggling, as doing this can prove to be a huge relief.



