

## Dementia-friendly & -inclusive gatherings

As a care partner of someone living with Alzheimer's or another dementia, you know the journey requires planning, preparation, and pacing. This especially applies to gatherings and special occasions, which typically take more energy and thought.

Care partners, this is your opportunity to prioritize your health and needs, as well as those of the person in your care. This isn't always comfortable, but it's key to making the day-to-day as well as gatherings less stressful and more joyful. These tips will help you recognize and change stress-induced habits and integrate some self-care behaviors into your caregiving routine.



### Tips for making gatherings merry, bright, healthy, and relatively stressless for everyone.

**Focus on what's most important.** Time together is the objective. Are there modifications you can make to gatherings without the added stress? What gives you and the person in your care the most meaning? Ask yourself: "What truly matters? What can I let go of?"

**Adjust expectations accordingly and ask for help.** Be honest, if you've always hosted and prepared everything, is this realistic in the context of caregiving responsibilities? Would a potluck, or coffee and treats, work better with family and friends helping with the menu, set up, and cleaning?

**Make time for laughter.** Humor, especially when it induces laughter, is a great stress reliever, as well as a great way to bond. Find opportunities to laugh often -- it's good for your health. Incorporate long-term traditions (foods, music, etc.) as those with dementia typically hold on to long-term

memories longer. Reminiscing on family memories or looking at photos can be very meaningful if other activities are too challenging.

**Use the buddy system.** Plan to have others take turns being the buddy for the person in your care. This is a great way to encourage one-on-one time as well as minimize any stress the person in your care may experience. It also provides a break for the primary caregiver. This break is a beautiful gift to both the caregiver and the "buddy."

**Gratitude.** There is always something to be thankful for. What is that for you? Sometimes gratitude takes practice, but it is a proven stressbuster and can positively affect your health. It changes your perspective and helps you see that there is always some good in life, even in tough times. To focus on the positive, jot down 3 things you're grateful for each day.