

REKINDLING HOLIDAY TRADITIONS



ACTIVITIES

What are the holiday traditions that you remember from your youth? Who are the people who created those memories for you? For your parent or older adult, the memories they helped create are often the ones that sustain them in their older years.

Often travel and intensive decorating or party activities are difficult for your older adult. There is no reason for a holiday celebration to be a burden on either yourself or your loved one. However, it can also be difficult for your loved one to know that you might be continuing with travel or celebrations with family and friends without them. Be mindful that holiday depression can be worse for those who believe their best years are behind them.

You can help make the holidays special through even the simplest things that you can do. Loved ones with memory challenges often relive the feeling of the holidays through the scents and tastes of the season. Be mindful that chaotic lights and decorations might be overwhelming, but a few memorable decorations, holiday delicacies, or the scent of pine or cookies might spark hints of memories.



Holiday crafts to do with your loved one

- Holiday wreath
- Filled stockings
- Pomanders with oranges and cloves
- Decorate cookies
- Simple ornaments (kits can be purchased at your local craft stores)



Source: [Daily Caring](#)

Small new traditions throughout the season can be effective in creating the holiday mood:



- Bake holiday cookies or work on easy crafts with grandchildren.
- Take an easy drive out to look at lights or participate in a holiday service.
- Put up some decorations to surprise your older adult. Remember to remove them at the end of the season so they don't feel the pressure to clean up.
- Set up smaller gatherings with neighbors and friends.
- Arrange Zoom or video calls with relatives or friends that are further away.
- If family is inclined to travel, consider having them come at different times throughout the month rather than one big gathering.
- Play holiday music or watch holiday movies.
- If your loved one has cherished holiday decorations, take one or two out and ask them to talk about them. Who does it make them think of? What are the memories connected to that piece? How long have they had it?
- If your older adult is capable and wants to help, don't exclude them under the guise of doing it for them. Find options for them to help create the magic.

Source: [Aging Care](#) and [Care.com](#)

If family can't come to visit over the holidays and you are planning to go visit them without your loved one, think ahead and start some in-home care before the holidays so that the caretaker becomes family. Ensure that your caretaker knows their religious and tradition preferences and ask them to help create the holiday spirit in your absence.

Not everything has to be holiday specific. As we age, family time and quiet activities together can take on new importance over gaudy decorations, resplendent trees, and hectic gatherings.

Some ideas for indoor activities that can be planned throughout the winter months include:



Play card or board games. They can be as simple or complex as your loved one is able to enjoy.



Have a family movie night with popcorn, hot chocolate, warm blankets, and fluffy pillows.



Invite a friend over for a tea chat.



Prompt grandchildren to ask about the "olden days" and traditions that might have gone by the wayside.

Source: [Aging Care](#) and [Care.com](#)



Considerations for guests

- Let guests know ahead of time of any physical or communication challenges that your loved ones have, and how to respect their time and abilities best.
- If there are multiple guests in a room, limit cross talk.
- Make sure to ask questions of your loved one and allow them time to respond.
- Encourage guests to bring their own food or offer a potluck meal so that your loved ones don't feel the need to host.



Source: [Alzheimer's Association](#)