

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for November 30, 2020
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll talk about celebrating the holiday season with family living with Alzheimer's disease

Do you know that OSU Extension offers a Healthy Aging Network Telecast each month featuring a variety of topics related to healthy aging? My colleague, Kathy Tutt, hosts several guests and specialists in the field of aging. You can view these telecasts at go.osu.edu/healthyagingnetwork.

This month the topic is "Holiday season and managing family with Alzheimer's disease." Tutt interviews Karen Rose, the Director for the Center for Healthy Aging, Self-Management and Complex Care in the College of Nursing at The Ohio State University. Rose offers some practical advice to prepare for the holidays, especially in light of adjustments due to the pandemic.

One of the most useful things I learned was about phraseology. Often you may hear the phrase that an individual is suffering from Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Rose suggests we change the lens and instead refer to an individual as someone living with Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

Rose also encourages us that the holidays can still be meaningful and joyful. Preplanning is key to helping this happen. One of her tips is communicating with the person with dementia about what the holidays are and that they are coming up. Because their long-term memory may still be intact, once decorations go up or cookies are baked, they may be able to tell that it is Christmas time.

Managing expectations is also very important. This way you don't set yourself up for feelings of frustration or set up your loved one for feelings of failure. Match your expectations with what they can functionally do and then monitor how they are doing. If you give them an assignment and you notice that they are distressed, then modify it, give them help, or give them something different to do.

Keep to a schedule as much as you can. That can be tough with certain activities but communicating with other family members can help. Have tools in your tool kit. If your loved one with dementia becomes over-stimulated, consider getting out an old family photo album or some other activity that you know is soothing and calming for them.

If you are only meeting over technology, consider doing some practice runs to be sure that your computer and connection is in working order. If you are meeting in person, remember that masks could be scary. Consider that your loved one may not be able to see people well or hear people well, which could be frustrating for them.

The Alzheimer's Association also has some tips and support to celebrate the holidays safely during COVID-19 at [alz.org](https://www.alz.org). They suggest that simplifying celebrations, planning ahead, and setting boundaries can help you minimize stress and create a pleasant holiday experience for you and the person with dementia.

Some ideas they have for creating a safe and calm space are to avoid blinking lights or large decorative displays that can cause confusion. They also suggest avoiding decorations that cause clutter or require you to rearrange a familiar room.

One positive suggestion is to play favorite music. Familiar or favorite holiday music may be enjoyable. Just be sure to adjust the volume to be relaxing and not distressing.

Preparing for the holidays can be a sweet time together. But part of managing expectations involves staying focused on the task rather than the outcome. Mix batter, decorate cookies, open holiday cards, or make simple decorations.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!