

If you are planning a large family dinner, make it a potluck. Make sure your person is well-rested and does not feel responsible for making the meal. Have a few easy tasks the person can do to help such as peeling potatoes or carrots, mixing things, or putting serving spoons in the food dishes.

Do not expect the person to address and write holiday cards without considerable assistance. Pare the Christmas list to a few people who remain important to you and your person. If planning holiday shopping, go with a short list and think about 90 minutes to two hours as the maximum shopping time. Plan to spend extra time as the person with dementia will need more time to process; however do not make it “a full day of shopping.” Avoid peak shopping days and times. Instead of using gift wrap, try using decorative gift bags.

At the holiday gathering, focus on simple activities that stimulate family interaction among the generations. This can help to generate new memories and traditions:

- **Use music** - Sing holiday songs and/or listen to recorded holiday music. Be sure to pick a familiar artist (e.g. Bing Crosby) v. a new artist’s holiday album whose voice and rhythm will be less familiar. Sing-a-long albums can help with initiating this activity which can be fun for the entire family!
- **“I’m Grateful”** - This can be done at the dining room table before the holiday meal or during dessert. Each person around the table starts a statement with “I’m grateful for.” The results can be heartwarming, surprising, or even funny. This simple exercise helps your person to focus on the love they feel for family members and allows them to respond in their current reality. It can help visiting family to understand the “new normal” that is filled with meaning.
- **“What makes you laugh?”** – This can be a discussion of silly jokes, old TV shows, or reminiscing about family mishaps. The goal is to generate laughter. Ask family or friends if you can borrow copies of “Johnny Carson” or “The Carol Burnett Show” which contain much humor.
- **Watch “It’s a Wonderful Life”** and other holiday movies together. Familiar movies are likely to include “Miracle on 34th Street,” “White Christmas,” “Holiday Inn,” “Meet Me in St. Louis,” and “A Christmas Carol.”

Reminder to keep it simple, avoid unnecessary overwhelm, create realistic expectations while focusing on meaningful moments with your person and your family this holiday season.

Holiday Gift Guide for the Person with Dementia and Caregiver

Mild Disease

- Telephone with pictures of people on speed dial - www.alzstore.com
- Electric medication dispenser -www.alzstore.com
- Medic Alert/Safe Return ID band –www.alz.org
- Gift certificate for grocery delivery
- Monthly cleaning services
- GPS on cell phone(check with your cell provider)
- Lifeline - www.lifelinesys.com
- Electric sonic toothbrush
- Hand-held shower head
- A gift certificate of your time such as a monthly lunch date
- Wii Exercise program

Moderate Disease

- Food basket with non-perishable items
- Bathroom grab rails
- Favorite bath products and a nonskid safety surface for tub
- Cleaning help
- Respite services such as in-home companion or adult day programming
- Vintage videos and music - www.alzstore.com
- Family photos in an album labeled with who is in each picture and where it was taken

Advanced Dementia

- A Rollator-type walker with two wheels or rear wheel retractable brakes, seat, and basket (no hand brakes)
- Gift certificates for care supplies including disposable adult briefs
- Respite care
- Scented oils, especially lavender and citrus for massage
- Picture books that represent favorite interests, landscapes
- Music
- Coloring books and crayons

Caregiver Gifts:

- The gift of time: coupons for cleaning the house, preparing a meal, mowing lawn, respite times that allow the caregiver time off to focus on what he/she needs.
- Gift Certificates: Give gift certificates for restaurants and laundry/dry cleaning services, especially those that deliver; lawn care services; computer/technology support; maid services; personal pampering services such as massages, facials, manicures/pedicures.
- The gift of listening: Accompany the caregiver to a support group, weekly calls, routine “thinking of you” notes
- Subscription to a favorite magazine, Sirius XM radio, Netflix
- Things to do while alone such as iPad with games, e-reader, etc.

Ask The Expert

Dear BAI Families and Friends:

This year, instead of answering a care question we decided to use this space to thank you for the wonderful love and care you provide to someone with dementia. The Stead Family Memory Clinic, Family and Community Services and Clinical Trials teams at Banner Alzheimer’s Institute have had the honor of serving patients and families affected by dementia for seven years. Since then, we have been privileged to meet and serve hundreds of dedicated families like yours. You have allowed us to share our expertise as we answer questions, help to solve problems, find community resources; and you have challenged us to develop new education, support and outreach programs.

The greatest privilege for all of us is meeting and learning from you, your families, and your person with dementia. We would like you to know how grateful we are to know and serve you during this stressful time of giving care. We work hard to earn your trust and are proud of the confidence you have in us.

While we know the holidays can be difficult for families facing a dementia, we wish you a warm and meaningful holiday season. Please know that we consider the opportunity to help your family a gift. We wish you a happy holiday season and New Year as we will continue to bring you education, support and quality of life programs.

The Entire BAI Staff

Have a Question?

To submit your question for future consideration
email us at:
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Banner Alzheimer's Institute

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Banner Alzheimer's Institute

BAI Beacon

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Beacon Bits *(Continued)*

COMPASS: Directions for Caregivers after the Dementia Diagnosis

Thursday, January 16, 12:30 – 2 p.m. OR
Friday, January 31, 12:30 – 2 p.m.
Banner Alzheimer's Institute,
Third Floor Conference Room
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.
Call (602) 839-6850 to register.

Communication Tips to Avoid Arguments

Tuesday, January 21, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
Banner Alzheimer's Institute,
Third Floor Conference Room
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.
Call (602) 839-6850 to register.

Brain Health Tip:

Reminiscing about positive life events can have a significant impact on mood and can contribute to healthy aging. Take time during a holiday meal to reminisce about something fun, positive and/or important!

Did You Know?

Did you know, Banner Alzheimer's Institute is a not-for-profit and relies on financial contributions of the community to support programs and services offered to our patients and families? Make a gift and join our community of friends, call 602-747-GIVE (4483) or visit www.banneralz.org/waystogive.

Our Mission

To end Alzheimer's disease without losing a generation, to set a new standard of care for patients and their families, and to forge a model of collaboration in biomedical research.

Beacon Bits

Hallelujah!!

Holiday Concert by North Valley Chorale
Sunday, December 8, 2013 at 3:00 p.m. at
the Chaparral Christian Church
6451 E. Shea Boulevard, Scottsdale, AZ.
Call 602-839-6850 to get your FREE or
discounted tickets.

Planning Ahead for Caregiver

Monday, December 9, 4:00 – 6:00pm
Banner Alzheimer's Institute,
Third Floor Conference Room
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.
Call (602) 839-6850 to register.

GPS Lecture: Staying Afloat with the Changing Roles and Relationships in Dementia

Friday, December 13, 10:30 a.m. – Noon
Ahwatukee Recreation Center
5001 East Cheyenne Drive, Phoenix 85044
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (602) 230-CARE

GPS Lecture:

The Alzheimer's Prevention Diet with Dr. Marwan Sabbagh

Friday, January 10, 10:30 a.m. – noon
Musical Instrument Museum
4725 E. Mayo Blvd., Phoenix
Free but registration is required. To
register, call (602) 230-CARE

The Holiday Issue: Honoring Traditions



It is time once again to prepare for the holidays. The holidays can be the happiest and saddest time of the year, especially for families trying to cope with a dementing illness. In past Beacons we have covered how to keep the holidays simple in order to prevent problem behaviors, a guide for visiting family, planning holiday dinners, and avoiding family conflicts. For those

interested in reviewing any of these, they are available online at <http://www.banneralz.org/news-plus-media/bai-beacon-newsletter.aspx>

This year we will address how to honor the person with dementia using family traditions. Holiday traditions are a way of celebrating memories through specific activities that have provided meaning over the years and across generations. Performing these activities not only delight us but help us to remember family and friends who are no longer with us. Practicing these cherished activities becomes an exercise in reminiscence, an activity many people with dementia are able to participate in and enjoy.

The secret to making a traditional celebration is to keep it simple. This means communicating that plan with all family members and relevant friends who will participate in holiday activities. It is not uncommon to have at least one person in the family whose agenda is to come for an overnight visit or even think that the person with dementia should prepare a holiday feast. A good way to prepare family for the "new normal" that you have created for you and your person is to send a letter stating important information such as: "Mom will not be preparing the dinner as this activity now creates too much anxiety and overwhelm;" "House guests upset the routine and cause more confusion so we kindly ask that other arrangements be made;" or "Dad will enjoy dinner much better if we have it midday instead of our tradition of 5pm, as he is likely to be more irritable, participate less, etc.;" "We may cut our time short at family gatherings as Mom fatigues more quickly, but we would love a scheduled and more intimate visit with each of your families at our home during her best time of the day."

It is also important to look at how you might simplify traditions. For example, while your mom once baked dozens of cookies and enjoyed giving them as gifts, now you might consider spending a few hours making cookies from commercially prepared cookie dough. While you engage her in this activity, ask her questions like: "Don't you love the smell of your cookies baking?" "What is your favorite cookie?" "Who do you think we should give these to?" "Do you think your mom or dad would have liked these?" "Did your mom bake cookies when you were little?" Perhaps you can reminisce about some of your favorite memories of cookies, the holidays, etc. while avoiding leading or asking, "Do you remember?" questions.

(Continued)