

ELDER LAW REVIEW

November 2016 Edition

Caregiving during the Holidays

The holidays are full of fun, family and tradition, but for some caregivers, they can be incredibly stressful. With the holidays come added obligations, visits from extended family, and other added stressors which can make the holidays overwhelming for both the caregiver and those being cared for.

Here are some tips to help you not only survive, but thrive this holiday season:

1. *Avoid crowded and noisy places*
Loud noises may confuse or frustrate loved ones. Instead, prioritize smaller and more low-key events that won't add to confusion or stress.
2. *Manage sugar intake*
Be cautious of over-indulgence in sugary foods which can lead to behavioral issues. Also, try to avoid alcohol which can lead to depression and increase the risk of falls.
3. *Prepare out of town guests*
The holidays are a great time to get families together but they can be challenging for caregivers and guests alike. Let visitors know their loved one may not remember them and explain any known behavioral issues to make yourself and guests feel more comfortable should something arise.
4. *Maintain Routines*
This can be challenging during the holidays when parties go late, but try to keep your loved one on a similar routine so that holiday preparations do not become disruptive.
5. *Involve your loved one in holiday preparations*
The holidays are fun and having loved ones participate can create special memories for you. Decorating cookies, hanging decorations, setting

the table, and even wrapping gifts are some examples of things they can do to help celebrate.

6. *Be creative in giving gifts*
Think through safe gifts that a loved one can use and ask people to purchase those gifts. Ideas include clothing, music, videos or photos, or identification bracelets.
7. *Keep traditions alive and well*
Just because a loved one may not remember past traditions does not mean that you can't continue to honor them. Singing Christmas carols, lighting a menorah or eating holiday foods can help a loved one connect to holiday celebrations.
8. *Trust your instincts*
You know more than anyone else how much you as a caregiver and your loved one can handle without feeling overwhelmed. If an event or group of visitors feels like it may be stressful or troublesome give yourself permission to reschedule or decline.
9. *Join a support group*
The holidays can be a tough time for caregivers and those being cared for. The rate of depression increases during and after the holidays; so if you or your loved ones experience any signs of depression, contact a health care professional.
10. *Enjoy yourself*
The greatest gift at the holidays is time. Ask a family member, friend or healthcare professional to keep your loved one company so you can relish some respite—time for some holiday shopping, a walk in the park, checkers with an old friend or whatever present you want to give yourself.

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This is a great opportunity for you to become informed of the options available to you for your Estate Planning and Medical Assistance Planning needs.

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