

Snohomish County Seniors

Tips for simplifying the Holidays for your loved ones with Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia

By Tracy Cram Perkins

Holidays can be stressful. For people with Alzheimer's disease or dementia, the holidays can be overwhelming.

Look at a holiday gathering from their point of view. Your loved one is taken out of their normal routine, perhaps to a place they don't remember, and then asked to behave like they are "normal." Normal will last for a short time, until their senses hit overload.

Buried in the noise of multiple conversations, music, children playing, dishes clanking, flickering lights, and feeling crowded, they may say something like, "I want to go home," over and over. Or they may meltdown in front of everyone. They may throw things or yell or scream or cry.

The meltdown is a blessing in disguise. Now everyone will know that their loved one is not doing as well as they thought. It also opens the conversation about handling family gatherings differently.

The key is to simplify.

When creating a safe holiday space for a person with Alzheimer's or dementia keep these tips in mind:

- Create a Calm, Quiet Space. Small rooms feel safer to those with Alzheimer's or dementia. Your loved one can become overwhelmed in a large room or open space.
- Consider reducing loud or echoing sounds, increasing lighting levels, and preventing shadows.
- Avoid blinking lights, large decorations, disco balls, and reduce clutter, any of

these may trigger confusion or hallucinations.

• Reduce safety hazards by replacing burning candles with non-flickering electric candles. Flickering lights can trigger hallucinations. If you do burn candles, don't leave your loved one unattended.

• If possible, anchor any holiday trees to the wall.

• Remove any fragile decorations, small objects or anything that can be mistaken for food, like plastic fruit.

• Play your loved one's favorite holiday music but keep the volume low.

• If the walls and furniture are in the same color-tones, such as light-colored walls and light wood furniture, the furniture may become invisible to someone with dementia. Make sure there is enough color contrast between the furniture, floor, and the walls, or they won't see the furniture.

For contrast use a color that does not blend in with your holiday decoration. Instead choose a solid, bright color such as red, white, yellow, orange, green, or blue. Do not use the black, dark brown, or navy blue for contrast—unless it is something you want them to avoid. To someone with dementia those colors look like a hole.

• Prepare Family and Friends in Advance

Alert family and friends to any changes in your loved one's behavior since their last visit.

• Set boundaries by suggesting ways for your guests to listen patiently. For example,

not correcting errors or interrupting your loved one's stories. Ask your guests to bring photo albums that include photos of your loved one that they can use as conversation starters or use to distract your loved one from a repeating story loop. With an open mind, your guests may discover a recovered memory or hear an epic work of fiction.

• Furthermore, make sure everyone knows your loved one needs something in their lap to distract them from noises. That something could be a plush toy, a baby doll, a blanket or fidget quilt.

• Crowds and Dementia don't mix.

If you and your loved one are attending an event, keep the outing brief and be ready to leave early.

When celebrating at your home and feeding a crowd, consider changing to a potluck with each guest bringing something. During the meal, make sure your loved one is sitting in their usual seat, next to their favorite person who can assist them, so they feel safe and loved.

After the meal, if your loved one becomes restless or agitated, then their favorite person can take them to their room for some quiet time.

• Adapt holiday activities.

Consider spreading your holiday celebration over several weeks. For example, invite two family members over at a time to celebrate for an hour or two at the best time of day for your loved one, thus allowing your loved one to keep their daily rou-

tine intact. The next week invite another couple of family members over and so on. It ensures other family members spend quality time with your loved one too.

Keep the conversation quiet and relaxed. Plan simple activities your loved one can take part in. You can read a favorite holiday story, decorate cookies or cupcakes, open holiday cards, look at photo albums, create a memory book with your loved one's story in it, watch movies, or sing songs. Additionally, make sure a quiet space is set aside for your loved one in case they become stressed.

If you spread the celebration out over time, it will

reduce the stress and increase your loved one's socialization.

• Make time for self-care.

Some caregivers may not want to do this because they feel guilty for enjoying holiday activities without their loved one. Some may worry that if they give up care for even a short time, they will not

be able to handle the burden of caregiving again. Self-care works better if you do it before you need it—before you hit burnout.

If you feel overwhelmed with holiday planning and

See SIMPLIFYING on next page



3rd Month FREE!

(Limited time move in special)

Premier Luxury Retirement Living at a Fraction of the Cost.

Our bundled rent of \$2,795/month includes two chef prepared meals daily, weekly housekeeping service, transportation, activities and cable, electric, gas, water/sewer/garbage and HAPPY HOUR included!

We are a pet friendly community!

We are offering tours again! Please call for an appointment.

You are in good hands at Windsor Square!



Located right behind Fred Meyer

9912 48th Dr. NE, Marysville

360-653-1717

www.windsorsrliving.com



LUXURY INDEPENDENT & ASSISTED LIVING

MorningStar Invites You

Breakfast WITH Santa

A Holiday Tradition

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4
9:00-11:00AM

Mention this ad and receive a special gift to take home

RSVP | DECEMBER 1



425.272.6952 520 112th Street SW | MorningStarSeniorLiving.com

ADA EQUAL HOUSING ACT

Snohomish County Seniors

Simplifying

continued from page 4

activities, unload some of the burden by delegating tasks. Ask family and friends to help with addressing cards, cleaning, shopping, or to give you a break so that you can spend some time enjoying a holiday outing without caregiving.

Make sure your family and friends know to put your loved one and you, the caregiver, first. Your family and friends can adjust, the person with dementia cannot.

Simplifying your celebrations, planning, and setting boundaries can help you reduce stress, create memo-



ries for family and friends, and make for an enjoyable holiday experience for everyone involved.

Tracy Cram Perkins is the author of Dementia Home Care, How to Prepare Before, During, and After.

Briefs

Christmas Dinner

The Monroe Community Senior Center will host a drive-thru Christmas Dinner on Friday, Dec. 17 from 5-6 p.m. Dinner will include ham and all the fixins'. \$10 per dinner, all ages welcome. Bring cash for the gift basket raffle!

Reserve your dinners today by calling 360-794-6359. The center is located at 276 Sky River Parkway in Monroe.

Foot clinic

Julie Grimm provides foot clinic appointments which include having your feet soaked, light massage, nails clipped and bunions filed (clinic is for non-diabetics). Make your appointment for Dec. 17, Jan. 14 or Jan. 28 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Please bring a towel with you. \$23 members, \$26 non-members. Snohomish Senior Center, 506 Fourth St. in Snohomish. 360-568-0934.

Stilly Bingo

The Stilly Valley Center is pleased to announce the pop-

ular Bingo games are back! Tuesday bingo starts at 11:30 a.m., (warm up game at 11:15 a.m.), Friday bingo starts at 7 p.m. (warm up game at 6:45 p.m.). Pulltabs are also available during bingo. Face masks and proof of vaccination required.

The Stilly Valley Center is located at 18308 Smokey Point Blvd. in Arlington 360-653-4551.

Santa Bingo & Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest

The Snohomish Senior Center will host an Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest during the Santa Bingo on Saturday, Dec. 4. Doors open at 4 p.m., Early Bird Session at 5:15 p.m., Regular Session at 5:30 p.m.

Wear the ugliest Christmas sweater you can find and come join the fun! The cafe will be open.

The center is located at 506 Fourth St. in Snohomish.

Massages

Relax with a chair mas-

sage with Kathleen Sutton on Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The 15 minute massages are \$15 for members, \$18 for non-members. Sign up for an appointment at the Snohomish Senior Center, 506 Fourth St. in Snohomish or call 360-568-0934. Drop ins are accepted based on availability.

Community Breakfast with Santa

Join Santa and Mrs. Clause for breakfast at the Snohomish Senior Center on Saturday, Dec. 4 from 8:30-10:30 a.m. Menu will include pancakes or French toast, scrambled eggs, sausage links, biscuits and gravy, coffee or tea, and juice. \$5 suggested donation.

The center is located at 506 Fourth St. in Snohomish.

Rainbow Bingo

Save the date for Rainbow Bingo on Saturday, Jan. 15 at the Monroe Community Senior Center. There will be music, games, cash and prizes, and bingo! \$20 admission includes loaded nachos! Beer, wine and margaritas will be available for purchase. This is an age 21 and over event. Bingo packets sold at the door for \$5 each.

Reserve your spot today, 360-794-6359, www.mcsc.org or stop by the center, 276 Sky River Parkway in Monroe.

Church

Continued from page 1

The steeple work was accomplished last summer in construction that re-routed traffic. New bathrooms and exit stairs were also installed, and the electrical system was modernized, doubling capacity.

From the outside, St. John's maintains its original New England-based design, with steep-pitched A-frame roofs and the famed white cross on the peak of the steeple.

"The whole idea is to retain the historical feel of the church," Bee said.

St. John's was built in 1893 (for \$250!) and has since undergone several renovations and improvements.

Its parish hall, built in 1929, has served as a basketball court, dining room, dance floor, and general community gathering space.

St. John's is one of the earliest churches in the Diocese of Olympia, and one of few in Washington to operate continuously as a church since its construction.

"Being a church that is over 125 years old....our building has compelling needs for repairs and upgrades and we want to grow the opportunities to provide more service and ministries," wrote John Gray, chair of the previous capital campaign, in a 2020 letter to parishioners.

Church leaders have not yet decided on a name for the new fundraiser or on a contribution goal. The last campaign was titled "Invest in Our Future - Build Community."

The church has submitted designs and permit requests to the city. If all goes smoothly, construction will re-route traffic again in the summer of 2022 and be wrapped up by the fall.

Meanwhile leaders are busy writing grants and planning for what Bee said will be a "robust" capital campaign.

"Once (renovation) gets going, it's like a monster," Kenagy said. "And yes, you do have to feed it."



Tribune staff photo

The front of St. John's Episcopal Church on Second Street. A capital campaign for St. John's corrected the lean of its 128-year-old steeple.

Below: Steve Kenagy climbs ladders to show a Tribune photographer the interior condition of the steeple.



Doug Ramsay photo



Photo courtesy Candace McKenna

St. John's Episcopal began worship services in 1893.

Local Real Estate Knowledge Counts!

In a changing market put my experience to work for you. I am here to help!



Randy McMillan
425-327-9015
Local Real Estate Broker since the year 2000
randymcmillan@hotmail.com

Classified Ads

Manufactured Homes
Marysville
Mobile Haven Senior Park
Space from \$460.
RV and permanent. Laundry facilities.
Close to store, mall and restaurant.
WPI R.E. (206) 715-0286

Stilly Valley Center Family Caregiver Support Program

Information, Assistance and Referral
Are you caring for an elderly parent, neighbor or friend? Are you checking in with them for their health, safety and wellbeing? You may be eligible for support services provided by the Family Caregiver Support Program. Contact Angeles or Jeanne to start the screening process.



Call today for more information
360-653-4551 ext. 237
18308 Smokey Point Blvd.
Arlington

Holiday Open House
December 3 & 4

Join us as we start the holidays with:

- Sales throughout the store
- Product demos
- Kay Kopp Jewelry Trunk Show
- J.D. Howard will be signing his new book, *Journey to Hat Island* on Saturday, 12-3

Holiday Hours:
M-F 10-6
Sat. 10-5:30
Sun. 12-5

J. Matheson
Gifts, Kitchen & Gourmet

2615 Colby Ave., Everett
425-258-2287 jmatheson.com

Letters to the Editor

Send letters to:
The Tribune
P.O. Box 499
Snohomish, WA
98291-0499

e-mail: letters@snoho.com

Please limit your letters to 250 words. All letters must be signed by the author and include a phone number and address for verification. Anonymous letters will not be published, nor will long letters of thanks. Deadline for letters is Thursday at noon. The Snohomish County Tribune will edit all letters for brevity, clarity and style.