

BAI BEACON

*The Newsletter from Family and Community Services
Made possible by generous donations to Banner Alzheimer's Foundation*

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Ingredients for a Successful Holiday Season

As is our BAI tradition, our November issue is dedicated to navigating the holiday season- the most wonderful time, but also the most stressful time of year. Though every holiday celebration is unique, there are some common themes that can help minimize stress and maximize success for the person with dementia and family alike. This year, we share with you our 'ingredients' for a happy holiday season, complete with *substitutions*, because every good cook has a trick up their sleeve when they realize they are out an important ingredient.

Holiday greetings

The 'holiday letter' is still a tradition that many of us use to update people we care about. While you may not want to divulge every dementia detail to this annual list, consider carefully what is important to convey and to whom. For more casual acquaintances, it may be more appropriate to speak in a general nature, "While we suspected something was going on for a while now, we recently learned that (he/she) has Alzheimer's disease. We are both doing well and certainly look forward to our ongoing friendship." For some people, this will be the first time they have known someone with a dementia. For others, it may spurn them into action, and you may find support coming from an unexpected place.

For people you are closer with, provide them with more instructional information. Convey what your person enjoys doing, and how they could be helpful to both you and your person. Don't be afraid to give them specific ideas! If you will see them over the holidays, share tips about how to best communicate.

Substitution: If you send out boxes of holiday greetings and find it difficult to pare down your list consider printing address labels and get a stamp made with your persons signature, which will be more manageable than handwriting each card. This way, your person can still help you with this important activity.



Decorations

'Stockings hung by the chimney with care' doesn't quite cover the amount of decorating some of us do for the holidays! However, preparing the house for the holidays can add stress and overwhelm for a person with dementia who is struggling to make sense of the world around them. It can also easily become over-stimulating as lights, ornaments, holiday décor and moving furniture adds extra confusion. The holiday decorations maybe something that needs to be reconsidered for the comfort of your person.

'Ifs' and 'mays' abound in dementia care, and the holidays are no exception. If your person has always been a holiday decorating fanatic, there may not be any issue with transforming your abode into a winter wonderland. If they never cared much for decorating in the past, they likely won't care now. However, you cannot rely on old habits to dictate current reactions. Consider paring down the decorations just in case. If you person

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.

becomes overwhelmed easily, you may want to forgo the decorations all together this year.

Substitution: If you find yourself disappointed by the lack of décor in your own home, plan excursions to places that are known for their holiday displays. Many hotels or neighborhoods are known for their holiday splendor. Schedule time with your person to get a ‘taste’ of the holidays while keeping home the safe, familiar area your person has grown comfortable with.

Gatherings

Most holiday traditions involve gatherings of family and/or friends. These gatherings can range from small groups of friends to extended stay family members, and work parties, to the quintessential holiday feast. These gatherings are meant to be jolly occasions, but can cause anxiety for individuals with a cognitive impairment. Be sure to plan ahead, and modify. Instead of accepting every invitation that arrives in the mailbox, pick a couple that would be most comfortable for your person to attend. Think about how many people are going to be there and who can and will engage your person in conversation. When your person says he/she is ready to go, it is time to go.

For more intimate gatherings, communicate with attendees in advance. Let them know some of the gems that you have learned along the way. Tell them about good topics of conversation and hot button issues to be avoided. Let them know if there are changes to your usual habits, and why. Explain how they can help make the event more pleasurable for both you and your person.

For the large family gatherings, consider paring down both the number of people gathering and the length of time spent celebrating. Schedule gatherings during your person’s best time of day, and provide plenty of rest periods. You already know fatigue is the person with dementia’s worst enemy, and there are not holiday exemptions. Consider having a designated ‘quiet zone’ for your person to go if they start to become overwhelmed.

Substitution: If you find yourself looking at declined invitations that you know your person will not handle well, this is the perfect time to call in the reinforcements. Ask a family member or friend to stay at home with your person while you get out and enjoy some respite time at the holiday event while knowing your person is safe and comfortable at home.

The Feast

Late November through the New Year can seem like a perpetual feast, where every delicious recipe is showcased in all its glory. Be aware that some people with dementia can have trouble regulating their appetites – especially for sweets. You may find a tin of cookies has disappeared, or they simply aren’t hungry for regular meals anymore. Keep an eye on what your person is

consuming and, as always, try to keep it as balanced as possible. Remember, ‘out of sight, out of mind’ as a strategy for too many holiday goodies! On the opposite side of the spectrum, remember that large quantities of food can be overwhelming for some with dementia. Instead of placing the feast out on the dining table, think about plating the food in the kitchen so you can control portions and ensure your person isn’t turned off by all of the delicacies. Provide only those foods that you know he/she is likely to eat. It’s okay to give an extra serving of dessert!

Substitution: If you have been the one to cook the holiday feast, it may be time to share the recipes with the children and grandchildren asking them arrive with your hallmark dishes in hand. While they may not be able to cook it exactly like you did, it will be fun to see them try. It will also help them maintain these holiday traditions in the years to come. Remember, you can always order out your meal from a store or restaurant so you can save your energy for the gathering.

Traditions

One of the things that make holidays so special is that they are mired in tradition. Whether your traditions are rooted in a generations worth of history, or they are newly formed, they are often the hardest part of the holidays to forego or adapt. Realize that this inflexibility to adapt is exactly that—our inflexibility to adapt. Often times as caregivers, we have certain deeply held, uncompromising views of particular events—birthdays, anniversaries, and various holidays can easily fall into this category. If you find yourself saying things like, “because we have always done it that way,” realize that you are the one who is holding unrealistic expectations. You are the one who is ultimately going to feel the sting of disappointment if it doesn’t turn out as you had envisioned. Instead of holding an uncompromising view, understand that the opportunity lies in balancing control with acceptance. Traditions can be adapted and meaningful by practicing a little flexibility. This may even allow some new traditions to begin to take root.

Substitution: If special traditions are not going to work, think about how they can be modified to still hold meaning. Perhaps the change can create the beauty of transformation into something new. If Grandpa always hung scads of lights on the house each year, perhaps it’s time to teach the children and grandchildren how to do it and let Grandpa supervise. If you always attend the standing-room-only religious service, consider attending a different service where less people are present. Check with your church/synagogue to see if you can listen to the service online. You also may find a televised service that you can watch from the comfort of your home. The beauty of most traditions is there are usually ways to adapt them if we are open to it.

Remember to combine each of these ingredients liberally. Add a dash of joy, a sprinkling of gratitude and a pinch of acceptance. Remember that substitutions are adequate replacements for the originals. We wish you and yours a happy and healthy holiday season.

To learn more about this topic, be sure to join our Dementia Dialogue on Wednesday, November 18 from 12N to 1PM PST when Heather Mulder, BAI Outreach Program Manager facilitates the discussion "Preparing for the Holidays." To register, call 623-832-3248 or visit www.banneralz.org/dementiadialogues.



Ask The Expert

Jan Dougherty, MS, RN, FAAN
Director, Family and Community Services

Dear Jan:

My husband and I have always enjoyed an evening cocktail but ever since he was diagnosed with dementia it seems that he has been drinking more. Because he is less aware of the time of day, he is looking for a beer or asking me to mix him a martini earlier in the day. The problem is that once he finishes his drink, he forgets and demands to have another one. Going out to dinner has also become problematic as he immediately orders a martini, drinks it rather quickly and then wants another. This has become a rather contentious issue between the two of us as he doesn't understand that more than one drink makes him more confused. How can I get him to stop?

Signed,
Marilyn

Dear Marilyn:

What you describe is a rather common issue that family caregivers encounter. Because of memory loss and a decreased sense of time, the person with dementia consuming the alcohol quickly forgets that he/she has just finished the beverage and wants more. While the alcohol has a calming effect, as you have noted, it adds to your husband's confusion. The following are suggestions that other family caregivers have found effective in this situation:

- Try switching to non-alcoholic beer and wine. Specialty liquor stores often carry a larger variety of these products. Try a number of the products until you and your person find something you like. The person does NOT need to know that you are switching products!
- Give the person with dementia a first glass of their usual beverage and then follow it with the non-alcoholic substitute. If you need to, pour the non-alcoholic beverage into the person's usual wine/beer bottle so he/she believes it is the same beverage.
- For hard liquor, dilute the bottle with a portion of water by pouring out/reserving the liquor in another container (for the next time you dilute it). If the person complains that it doesn't taste the same, apologize and let them know the next time you are at the store you will get a new bottle. Of course you are not going to get a new bottle! You are simply avoiding an argument over alcohol consumption!
- If mixing a drink with liquor, use a splash v. usual amount. This can work especially well with drinks that utilize vodka.
- When going out for lunch or dinner, select a restaurant that does not sell liquor.
- Have your "happy hour" at home and order "to go" from your favorite restaurant so you can keep the situation under control.
- If the restaurant sells liquor, excuse yourself from the table to use the restroom. Instead, go talk with the waiter or directly to the bar and ask the bar tender to water down the drink. Ask the waiter to bring the drink with the meal. **Note this will take some pre-planning on your part. Think about taking along your companion card (My person has a condition that affects memory and thinking. Your patience is appreciated.)
- With the holidays fast approaching, ask that party hosts have non-alcoholic beverages available. Make your hosts aware that you are trying to limit the alcohol intake of your person and you would be grateful if they would refill the glass with non-alcoholic beer or wine.

Keep in mind that the ritual of the evening cocktail provides a welcomed routine. Begin to phase out alcohol all together and substitute other beverages in favorite cocktail glasses. Over time, the person with dementia will care less about the alcohol and simply enjoy the beverage and time shared with you. Don't make it a battle or get into arguments. Think ahead and start some creative substitutions. This too shall pass.

Have a Question?

To submit your question for future consideration email us at: baiinfo@bannerhealth.com

Alzheimer's Foundation will serve as an investment in the health and wellness of our community and others around the world. To make a gift and join our community of friends, call 602-747-GIVE (4483) or visit www.banneralz.org/waystogive.



Banner Alzheimer's Institute
Banner Sun Health Research Institute

Banner Health
901 East Willetta Street
Phoenix, AZ 85006

Thank You For Your Support

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, Banner Alzheimer's Foundation would like to thank those who have generously supported us this year. To make a gift and join our community of friends, call 602-747-GIVE (4483) or visit www.banneralz.org/waystogive.

Holiday Gift Guide

Gifts that promote safety:

- Memory or dial-less phone (Alzheimer's Store)
- Digital calendar day clock
- Automatic medication dispenser
- Medic Alert/Safe Return bracelet (patient & caregiver)
- GPS for cell phone
- Lifeline (for the person who lives alone)
- Handheld shower head
- Bathroom grab bars
- Nonskid safety surface for tub
- Shower chair
- Locks for doors and windows
- Front wheel walker

The gift of time:

- Scheduled outings to a favorite place, restaurant, or activity with the person with dementia
- Scheduled phone calls to the person with dementia to reminisce, laugh, encourage
- Scheduled phone calls to the caregiver to listen and support
- Create a memory book of favorite labeled people and places
- Accompany the caregiver to a support group or class

Caregiver gifts:

- Monthly cleaning service
- Assist with payment for respite care
- Assist with payment for transportation service
- Provide routine food service (delivered prepared food or groceries)
- Gift cards for take out
- Manicure/pedicure for the caregiver
- Spa treatment for the caregiver
- Movie tickets
- Netflix subscription

Gifts for activities:

- Picture books
- "Reminisce" magazine
- Simple art activities
- Favorite games
- Favorite music on a DVD, MP3 or iPod
- DVDs of old sitcoms, movies, TV shows
- Did you know a charitable gift through Banner

November 2015 Program Schedule CAREGIVER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

PHOENIX

COMPASS: Directions for Caregivers after the Dementia Diagnosis

Learn the basics of Alzheimer's disease/related dementia and how to implement 8 practical strategies to avoid many of the common problems that arise.

Wednesday, November 4; 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Banner Alzheimer's Institute
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (602) 839-6850

GPS Lecture for Caregiving – Finding Activities that Work in Dementia

Learn how to find simple, affordable and pleasurable activities both in and out of the home while assisting to create a daily calendar of fun.

Friday, November 13; 10:30 a.m. – noon
Musical Instrument Museum
4725 E. Mayo Blvd., Phoenix
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (602) 230-CARE (2273)

Planning Ahead Class for Caregivers

Learn how to plan for legal, financial and medical decisions for someone with Alzheimer's disease/related dementia.

Tuesday, November 10; 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Banner Alzheimer's Institute
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (602) 839-6850

PHOENIX (CON'T)

Caregiver FOCUS Session - Acupressure

Acupressure has been used for over 5,000 years in China to relieve stress, promote relaxation, and boost the immune system. During this practice, gentle to firm finger pressure is applied to specific points on the body to restore balance to the body's channels of energy and to regulate opposing forces of yin (negative energy) and yang (positive energy).

Thursday, November 19; 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Banner Alzheimer's Institute
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (602) 839-6850

As Dementia Progresses: Next Steps for Caregivers

Learn about the moderate to advanced stages of dementia, how common symptoms can be managed, how to cope with changing function while assisting caregivers to find success in their daily efforts.

Tuesday, November 24; 10:00 a.m. - noon
Banner Alzheimer's Institute
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (602) 839-6850

Please turn over for more classes →

To learn about upcoming education and support programs dates at:

- Banner Alzheimer's Institute, visit www.banneralz.org and click on "Events Calendar" icon or call Deidra Colvin, Events Coordinator at 602-839-6850
- Banner Sun Health Research Institute, visit www.bannershri.org and click on "Events and Education" or call Veronica Flores, Events Coordinator at 623-832-3248

November 2015 Program Schedule CAREGIVER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

MESA

Communication Tips to Avoid Arguments

Learn about changes in communication as dementia progresses and a variety of alternative strategies that will be practiced during class so that caregivers can walk away with new techniques to immediately put into place!

*Tuesday November 17; 10:00 a.m. – Noon
Mesa Library Red Mountain Branch
635 N. Power Road, Mesa
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (602) 839-6850*

SUN CITY

BSHRI Community Lecture Series – Personal Coping Skills

*Wednesday, November 11; 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Banner Sun Health Research Institute
10515 W. Santa Fe Drive, Sun City
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (623) 832-3248*

BSHRI Special Lecture in Honor of Alzheimer's Awareness Month– Meet Dr. Edward Zamrini – Speaking on Brain Health

*Wednesday, November 18, 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Banner Sun Health Research Institute
10515 W. Santa Fe Drive, Sun City
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (623) 832-3248*

**These programs are made possible
by the generous support of the
Banner Alzheimer's Foundation.**

SUN CITY (CON'T)

Planning Ahead Class for Caregivers

Learn how to plan for legal, financial and medical decisions for someone with Alzheimer's disease/ related dementia.

*Wednesday, November 18; 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Banner Sun Health Research Institute
10515 W. Santa Fe Drive, Sun City, AZ
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (623)832-3248*

SAVE-THE-DATE

North Valley Chorale presents "What Sweeter Music"

*Sunday, December 13; 3:00 p.m.
All Saints Lutheran Church
15649 7th Street, Phoenix
Tickets \$20 Adults, \$15 Seniors
Call 602-464-4100 for tickets*

