SENIORS AND THE HOLIDAYS:

Don’t forget it’s not easy for those with dementia.

Dementia and Alzheimer’s affect every aspect of life. Frankly, it’s not easy. And holiday events and observances can be particularly difficult. Joyous memories from before your loved one developed dementia may darken what usually is a bright and cheerful season. In addition, worries about what could happen may disrupt your family’s celebrations and upset the simple pleasure of being together.

Activities need to be greatly simplified and minimized to reduce this potential for stress. People who suffer from dementia can pick up on the moods of others. Keep the atmosphere serene and peaceful. If the person with dementia is placed in a situation with which he or she cannot cope, the result will be a behavior change or other symptoms of anxiety.

Pick and choose traditions that are the most important to you. Use your loved one’s favorite decorations to spark memories and increase their ability to enjoy the festivities. Avoid flashing lights and loud noises. A tree with blinking lights and loud sporting events on TV can be disorienting.

Engage your loved one with easy holiday tasks such as decorating cookies and putting tinsel on the tree. Holiday stories from long ago will draw your loved one in and keep them involved in the celebration. Take time to look at photo albums. Reminisce! Sing holiday songs! This will resurrect pleasant memories which will create moments of joy.

Though the holiday season is hectic, don’t forget to exercise – both of you! Go for a walk together. Put on a video and do a gentle yoga class in the privacy of your living room. Play Wii bowling or golf. Exercise increases endorphins in the blood, causing a reduction in stress.

Consider your needs, as well, and don’t take on too much. Ask others to provide side dishes for holiday meals. If friends and family members offer to help, let them! Skip sending out cards if it’s going to send you over the edge. No one will love you less.

At Highgate, we take great pride and joy in being experts in dementia care. We provide professional, compassionate, personalized care in a safe, loving, homelike environment. If you’d like a break from full-time caregiving during the holiday season, you might consider a Respite Stay for your loved one in our Memory Care community, The Cottage. It may even turn out to be an excellent long-term solution to a difficult and challenging living situation.

For more information about Highgate Senior Living and all the ways we help our Memory Care residents live each day to the fullest, please contact the community nearest you.