



## How to support somebody with dementia at Christmas

Christmas means many things to many people—typically a time for food, family and festivities. But for people affected by dementia it can be more difficult.



There is always so much to consider at Christmas, and that's especially true for carers.

So, with help from our online community [Talking Point](#), we've compiled a few tips to help you make the most out of the festive season. Here are some tips to help you support your loved one (and yourself) this Christmas.

## 7 top tips for carers at Christmas

### 1. Put decorations up gradually

Introduce the Christmas environment slowly. Think about putting decorations up gradually over a few days so it doesn't come as a big change to the person's usual setting. **Nae Sporrán said:** This year I put the tree up on the first of December to brighten the place up and it made 'C' so happy, she especially likes the old wreath she has had for years even if she doesn't recognise it."

### 2. Keep it simple and familiar

Someone with dementia may feel overwhelmed over the Christmas period, so it's best not to overdo it. Keeping the day's activities low key will help your loved one to relax. Sticking to a familiar routine is also a good idea where possible. Having meals at regular times and in familiar surroundings will help to limit any potential confusion.

### 3. Get everyone involved

There are many ways to involve people living with dementia at Christmas time – from something as simple as hanging a bauble on the tree to doing a spot of Christmas shopping. The important thing is that they feel included. **Soobee said:** With Christmas cards, my mum still wanted to send them out, so I got her to write her name on a piece of paper. I then scanned, resized and copied them and printed them out onto computer labels. Mum helped me to stick in a few of the labels so she felt involved, and I wrote the recipients name in at the top and did the envelopes. We did about 25 cards for her that year and she would never have been able to write her name more than once."

### 4. Create a quiet room

A large number of guests can be overwhelming, so ask family and friends to spread out their visits over the festive period. If things do get busy, designate one room in your house a 'quiet room' where your loved one can relax without loud noise.

## 5. Bring back old memories

Whether it's an old song they used to enjoy or a classic Christmas film, find something fun you can take part in. Making a family photo album or memory box could be a nice way to spend time together. **Agzy said:** I have created a memory iPad which has nothing but hundreds of photographs of friends, family and places. Using my computer I have added names, year dates and place names. It has been a long labour of love but has paid off dividends as I update it regularly with new photos of interest to her."

## 6. Be mindful of food

Although many people eat a lot at Christmas, a full plate can be daunting for someone who has difficulties eating. If you're doing the serving, try not to overload your loved one's plate. We've also got lots more general tips to help with [eating and drinking](#) on our website.

## 7. Be flexible

It's easy to get caught up in Christmas traditions, but your festive season might begin to look different as dementia progresses. It's always worth having a plan B, and be prepared to change your plans if a particular element isn't working. **Pinkys said:** main advice is to have no expectations. See what happens! The last Christmas my mother in law spent with us, she came down to breakfast on Boxing day already packed and dressed in her coat ready to go home! We were surprised....it also took some serious efforts to persuade her to stay at least one more day."