



TIPS FOR COPING WITH HOLIDAY STRESS!

Holidays and special occasions are meant to be joyful times that create lasting memories. Many people enjoy reuniting with family and friends to celebrate traditions during these times. However, for the person who is caring for a loved one with cancer, it can be challenging to balance caregiving responsibilities while preparing for an upcoming holiday or special occasion. By planning ahead and using the tips discussed in this fact sheet, caregivers and their loved ones can find ways to get the most out of special events.

Here are some tips for caregiving for a loved one with cancer during holidays and special occasions:

Talk with your loved one about what the special occasion means to him or her. An upcoming holiday could have a new meaning for someone who is going through cancer treatment. Ask your loved one how he or she would like to celebrate, and then try to honor those wishes.

Talk to your health care team about upcoming special events. They may be flexible about appointments in order to accommodate travel or other needs.

Adjust your expectations. Consider if an upcoming event may place too much of a burden on you or your loved one. For example, caregivers who traditionally host a holiday celebration at their home may decide to invite fewer guests this year, or not host the event at all. They may also consider hosting a “pot luck” dinner, in which others bring most of the food.

Establish new traditions. Caregivers who usually cook holiday meals, for example, may decide to order the meal from a restaurant or caterer. Or, they could ask a friend or loved one to assist them with the cooking this year.

Enjoy special moments. Try to focus on new traditions that have been established, rather than dwelling on how cancer has changed a holiday or special occasion. It is also important for caregivers to care for themselves during these times, in order to provide the best care for their loved one. Here are some tips for doing this:

Acknowledge your feelings. It is normal for caregivers to experience feelings of loss or sadness over how cancer has changed a special occasion. But some may feel they have to portray themselves as happy and cheerful so as not to alarm family, friends, or a loved one with cancer. Try not to hold in all your feelings; share them with someone you trust, such as a loved one or professional counselor.

Celebrate strengths you and your loved ones have developed. Many families who face the day-to-day challenges of cancer discover strengths and courage they didn't know they had. For example, you may recall how brave your loved one was while receiving chemotherapy. Reflect on the strengths you have developed, and build on them during the holidays.

Do something good for yourself. Take some time out each day to relax and recharge, even if it is simply taking a walk around the block.

Recognize that you are doing your best. Acknowledge your efforts to care for your loved one and all you are doing to make a special event memorable and enjoyable.

<http://www.azmn.info>

Sincerely, Barbara Kavanagh, Founder, CEO and Caregiver

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