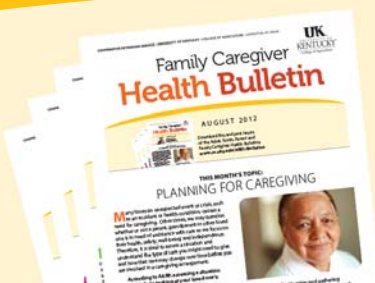


Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



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K-State Research & Extension
Atchison County Office
405 Main/PO Box 109
Effingham, KS 66023
913-833-5450

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

NAVIGATING THE HOLIDAYS AS A CAREGIVER

Caregiving can be stressful, and these stresses can be intensified around the holidays as you are faced with added responsibilities and obligations. Whether this is your first holiday season as a caregiver or you have been providing care for years, you can do several things to make the holidays easier on you, the person you're caring for and your extended family and friends by following the recommendations below.

- **Plan ahead.** Shop for gifts and food, and plan your holiday schedule well in advance. Doing so can minimize the chances you will feel rushed or stressed as the holidays approach. In addition, it may be helpful for you to spread out your holiday spending over a few months instead of just one. Part of planning includes not over-committing yourself to events and celebrations. While social activity is healthy, too much during the busy holiday rush may increase stress.



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- **Prepare your guests.** This may be the first time family and friends will see their loved one after a change in health or since you became the caregiver. Share or remind your guests of any physical and mental impairment your loved one may have. You don't want your family members or the person you're caring for to be frustrated or embarrassed by their limitations. Celebrate the holidays where the person you are caring for resides. Familiar environments tend to keep both caregiver and care recipient stress levels lower. Working with friends and family to maintain a calm, and even quiet atmosphere, can also help reduce stress levels.
- **Start new traditions.** Sometimes caregiving situations force changes in holiday traditions. Stay positive and don't feel guilty that you may have to make some adjustments. Embrace opportunities to build from old traditions or create totally new ones. Have a potluck meal instead of cooking everything yourself. Open presents at the nursing facility instead of in front of the fireplace.
- **Ask for help.** There is no better gift than the gift of giving. Ask someone to run errands for you, such as mailing holiday cards or picking up items from the grocery store, or have a friend or family member stay with your loved one so you can do those tasks. Most people are happy to help and will be glad you asked.
- **Take time for yourself.** Take a break from caregiving and holiday planning to do

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something for just you. Simple things such as taking a winter walk, working on a long-overdue project or enjoying coffee and conversation with a friend or family member can help improve your spirits and well-being, making you a better, more productive caregiver. Making an effort to eat healthy and exercise during the holidays is important for caregiver health too.

Most importantly, be thankful. Be thankful for your family and friends, and for the opportunity to be a caregiver — one of the most important jobs in the world. While it can be stressful, it can also be a rewarding experience that provides you with quality time that lends to building or strengthening relationships with someone you care about.

REFERENCE:

Age in Place. (2012). Holiday Survival Tips for Caregivers. Retrieved 10/31/12 from <http://ageinplace.com/caregiving/holiday-survival-tips-for-caregivers/>

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Written by: Amy Hosier, Ph.D.
Extension Specialist for Family Life
Edited by: Connee Wheeler
Designed by: Rusty Manseau
Stock images: 123RF.com

