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## How to Enjoy the Holidays with Your Senior Parents

Our Friends · Thursday, December 11th, 2025

The holiday season brings a special chance to spend time with the people who matter most. When your parents are older, the way you celebrate together might look different, but it can still be joyful and meaningful. Sometimes, it just takes a little creativity and some thoughtful planning to make these moments count.

Every family has its own way of doing the holidays. As parents get older, what works for them might shift. Whether your parents are at home or in assisted living, there are still ways to share the season. Here are a few ideas that might help.

### Homey Touches

Nothing welcomes the holiday spirit, like familiar sights, sounds, and scents. If your parents are in **assisted living Etobicoke**, bring some of their favorite decorations from home. Familiar ornaments, a favourite tablecloth, or cherished holiday cards can help make any space feel special. Even a small tree or string of lights can brighten a room and spark happy memories.

Music has a way of setting the mood and bringing people together. Create a playlist with songs they've always loved. Play holiday classics during visits or have a little sing-along if they're up for it. Don't forget about scents. Baking cookies or simmering cinnamon sticks on the stove can fill the air with seasonal cheer. Simple touches like these can turn an ordinary day into a celebration.

### Shared Meals

Food is a big part of the holidays for most families. If your parents like to cook, you can make something together. In assisted living, the kitchen might be small, but you can usually find a way to bake cookies or share snacks. Even just bringing in a pie or a meal from home can make things feel more like a holiday.

If your family has traditional recipes, now is a great time to revisit them together. Ask your parents for stories about those dishes, where they came from, who used to make them, and what memories they bring back. Mealtime doesn't have to be fancy to be meaningful. The conversation and company matter most.

### Simple Activities

Choose activities that are easy to enjoy at any age. Card games, puzzles, or watching a favorite

holiday movie can bring everyone together without much fuss. If your parents like crafts, work on something simple, like making holiday cards or stringing popcorn for decoration. These little projects offer a sense of accomplishment and create moments to talk and laugh.

Many assisted living communities organize holiday events, concerts, craft fairs, or group games. Check the activity calendar and join your parents for something they might like. These shared experiences can be fun and might even spark new traditions.

## **Visits and Calls**

If travel is tricky, regular visits or phone calls can go a long way. Even short chats can brighten your parents' day and make them feel remembered. For those in assisted living, coordinate with staff about the best times for visits or video calls. Bring grandkids or other relatives along when possible. Seeing familiar faces adds extra cheer.

If you can't be there in person, set up a video call and plan a virtual activity, like reading a holiday story together or showing off decorations from home. Small gestures, like sending a handwritten note or photo, can also make your parents feel close, no matter the distance.

## **Gifts that Matter**

When picking gifts for senior parents, think about what will bring comfort and joy. Cozy blankets, puzzles, or favorite snacks are always welcome. If your parents are in assisted living, check with the staff about what items are allowed or helpful. Personalized calendars with family photos, digital picture frames, or magazine subscriptions they enjoy can also be thoughtful choices.

Sometimes, the best gift is your time. Plan an afternoon to look through old photo albums or listen to your parents reminisce about holidays past. These moments of connection often mean more than anything you could wrap.

## **Memory Lane**

Holidays are a natural time to reflect. Encourage your parents to share stories from their younger days or family traditions that have faded. Bring out old photos or keepsakes and ask about the people and events behind them. Listening to these stories can help you all feel more connected to each other and to your family's history.

If your parents live in assisted living, see if you can help create a display of their holiday memories. A small scrapbook or bulletin board with photos, mementos, and handwritten notes can prompt conversation and spark happy memories for them and for visitors.

## **Community Spirit**

Assisted living communities often have their own ways of celebrating. Attend events with your parents, or help them get involved in group activities. Volunteering together can add purpose to the season.

Ask the staff about special holiday programs and encourage your parents to join in. Being part of a group can help ease feelings of loneliness and make the holidays feel more festive. Sometimes, the simplest activities bring the most warmth.

If there's one thing to remember, it's that the holidays are about being together in whatever way works best for your family. The effort you put into sharing these days with your senior parents is what truly matters.

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