



Haven
BEHAVIORAL HOSPITAL
of Albuquerque



Family Challenges During the Holidays

While we all like to pretend that we are that happy family in any one of the numerous television commercials celebrating the holiday season, most of us know that the holidays can bring challenges for families of all ages, especially when elderly family members have so many needs. Coping with the needs of the elderly family members can feel overwhelming even during a normal month without the added stress of extra activities and responsibilities that come with the holidays. This holiday season try to manage your family challenges by creating positive, engaging activities that can include the whole family, lending a listening ear to elderly family members or simply letting go of the need to be perfect. You and your family will thank you for these small changes in activities and behaviors.

Try to involve all family members in activities that can contribute to the community during the holiday season. Many communities or organizations offer volunteer opportunities that can use the support of people of all ages. Consider creating this time as a way for all members of the family to participate in a shared experience that makes everyone feel better because of their contributions, no matter how large or small. Giving back together fosters family unity.

Next, a listening ear may be just what an elderly person needs. Many times people, both young and old, simply want to be heard whether it involves retelling a favorite story or expressing frustration regarding a current living situation. Allow the individual the opportunity to share what is on his or her mind. Listen without passing judgment so that he or she can speak freely; however, set boundaries in conversations if needed. For example, "I have 15 minutes before I need to leave for my next appointment. Let's talk now and then we can talk again later if needed." In this way, you set parameters in the conversation for both you as the listener and the speaker.

Lastly, remember that perfection is not the goal during the holidays. Try to be as present as possible with your family members and sometimes that means that not every tradition or decoration gets checked off your list. Breathe in and breathe out; be present for your loved ones and everyone will feel happier. Then, you can remember what is important: each other.

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