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Enlightened Communication with your Loved One with Dementia



**Carol Taylor, LCSW
Elder Care Advisor
November 10, 2021**



Today's Agenda

1

Welcome and Introductions

2

Presentation: Enlightened Communication with your Loved One with Dementia

3

Discussion: How will I engage and connect with Family and Friends during the Holidays?

4

Thank you

Welcome !

Wyoming Center on Aging
Facilitator: Sabine Schenck, M.S.
Technical Support: Jenny Wolf

The goal of today's session is to provide you with insight and education on how to celebrate the holiday season with your loved ones with dementia and how to set realistic expectations, take care of yourself and your loved one and communicate effectively with members of your community.



Sabine Schenck



Jenny Wolf

Today's Speaker



Carol Taylor, LCSW, Elder Care Advisor

Carol is a clinical social worker specializing in geriatric, hospice and medical social work. Carol has worked for nearly 40 years in various health care and community settings. Carol enjoys counseling and companioning elders with dementia as well as teaching and coaching families, health care professionals and community members.

Holiday Tips for the Caregiver

- **Be mindful of expectations**
- **Prepare your loved one as best you can**
- **Plan some “down time”**
- **Streamline your traditions**
- **Involve your loved one as you can**
- **Timing is Everything!**
- **Give Yourself a Gift: Just say yes!!**



Be Mindful of Expectations

- **Familiarize family and friends with the behaviors and condition of your loved one.**
- **Send letters or emails letting them know the situation, protocol for visiting, including home COVID precautions (masks, social distancing, etc.).**
- **Have ideas of practical gift ideas for yourself and the person living with dementia, if asked.**
- **Skip “ideal” and aim for “workable”.**





COVID Considerations

- Will you gather in person or via Zoom, Skype, Face Time, other? Be sure to be familiar with operating your devices.
- Consider what works best for you and your loved one. If visits are acceptable to you , let folks know that 20 minutes is plenty. Longer visits can be exhausting for you and overstimulating for your loved one.
- Consider texting rather than phone calls.





COVID Considerations

- Ask for no drop-in/unannounced visits to minimize interruptions and "surprises".
- Updates of your loved one's condition may be helpful for family and friends.
- Communicate your COVID-19 protocol clearly.



Communication Tips

- **Be mindful of "over speaking"; that is multiple conversations; repetitious verbal directions, information and general chit-chat.**
- **Your loved one may not be able to follow a detailed conversation nor interpret what is being said.**



Enhancing meaningful exchanges

- **If our goal is to include our loved one, let's assure they do not become over-stimulated, set up successful opportunities and attend to their needs and preferences.**
- **Non-verbal communication, gestures, nodding, gentle touch, and using physical cueing techniques can greatly ease over-stimulation.**

Non-verbal skills

- **Gently place utensils in your loved one's hand rather than verbally direct to "remember to use your fork".**
- **Hand them their water glass instead of saying "take a drink".**



Non-verbal skills

- **When it is time to move from the living room to the dining room, have a grandchild tell your loved one "It is time to eat, come with me". They can take their hand and escort them to the table.**
- **No other verbiage is necessary and often can cause more difficulty than a gentle non-verbal touch.**



Prepare your loved one



- Visual cueing can be helpful for some.
- Consider asking family/friends to wear name tags (first name only) to reduce stress of recall for everyone.
- May be best to avoid artificial fruit/food and blinking or flashing lights which can be confusing or irritating.

Streamline your Traditions

- Hold a virtual family meeting or conference to discuss upcoming events; speak your needs.
- Make sure that everyone understands your care-giving situation and has ***realistic*** expectations about what you can do and what your limitations are.



Streamline your Traditions

- Consider holding a simpler gathering with fewer people.
- Discuss having a potluck dinner or ask others to host the holiday celebration at their home.



... other considerations

If you have visitors coming to your home be sure to have a "restful" spot for your loved one if they become fatigued, distressed, overstimulated, confused, or agitated.



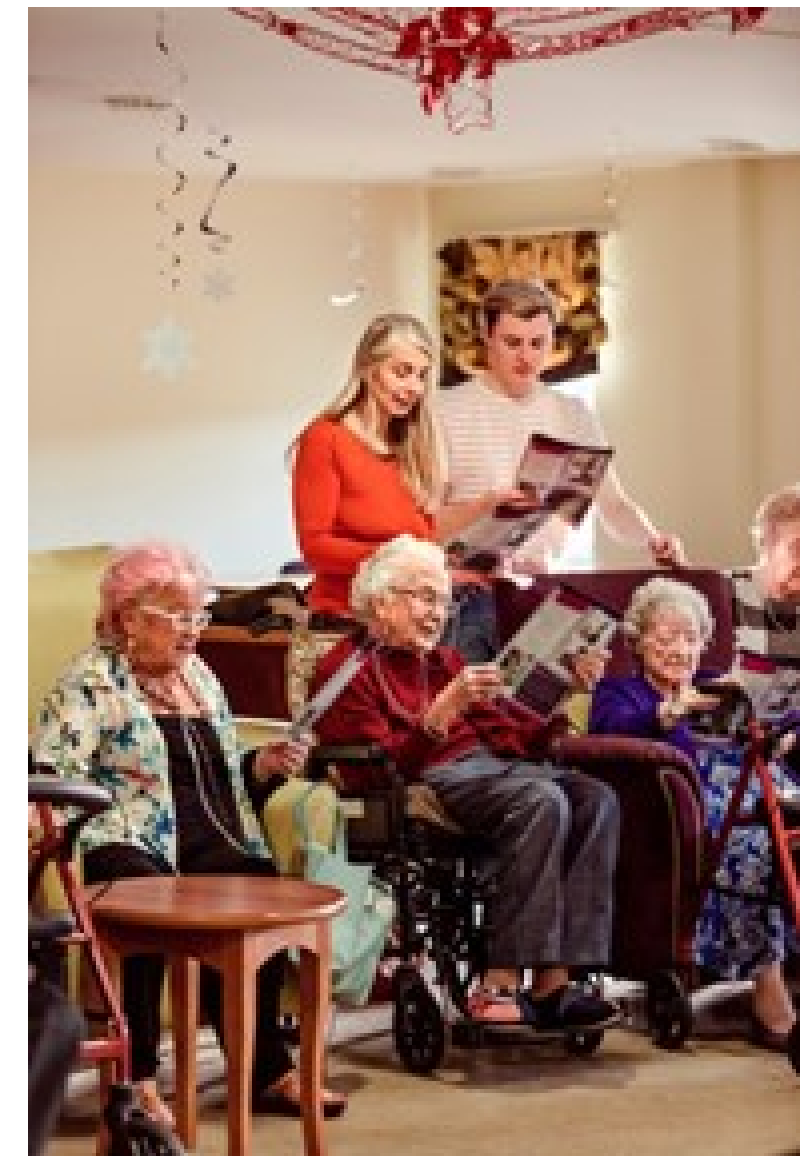
... other considerations

- **Ask a family member, prior to the gathering, to keep watch for signs of distress in your loved one and gently lead them to a restful place to quietly sit with them.**
- **Be mindful of background noises - TV, appliances, radio, or multiple conversations as these are difficult for your loved one to navigate.**

Involve your loved one as you can

Consider appropriate tasks and allow sufficient time to get them done - and realize the end-result may not be as expected.

- Baking cookies, mixing dough, tearing lettuce for a salad.
- Putting up seasonal decorations.
- One or two step tasks, like folding towels, polishing silver or stacking magazines.
- Carrying small items to the table or kitchen.
- Joining in a sing-a-long of carols.



Timing is Everything!

- **Consider celebrating earlier in the day to minimize fatigue and the likelihood for increased confusion, irritability and agitation.**
- **If you are gathering with others, it will be helpful for your loved one to rest for an hour or more in the early afternoon.**



Timing is Everything!

- **We know that sleep is restorative to our brains and is vital; especially during routine changes with holiday events.**
- **Don't serve alcohol (substitute sparkling cider or sparkling water).**
- **Keep the lights on to brighten the room.**



Give Yourself a Gift: Just say "YES"

- Make a list of 4 or 5 things you are willing to delegate to a friend or relative.
- When they offer to assist with specific tasks, projects, or respite (a few hours of care for your beloved), **JUST SAY YES!!**
- A phone chat with family members or a friend might be nourishing for you.
- Have a helper "on call" - if you have in-home care, ask if they could be on call for a morning or afternoon if needed.

say YES!

... and even more gifts

- **Call the Alzheimer's Association free 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900).**
- **Contact Wyoming Senior Citizen (877.634.1005) to determine whether they have respite care where you live.**
- **Contact your local Senior Center or talk to your primary care provider to find out about respite care.**
- **Consider exploring adult day care in your area for a day or two of "respite" for you and a "change of scenery" for your loved one. This requires some preplanning; the organizations above can assist you.**



Group Discussion

What are some things that resonated with you today?

What is one new thing that you will try out during the holidays?

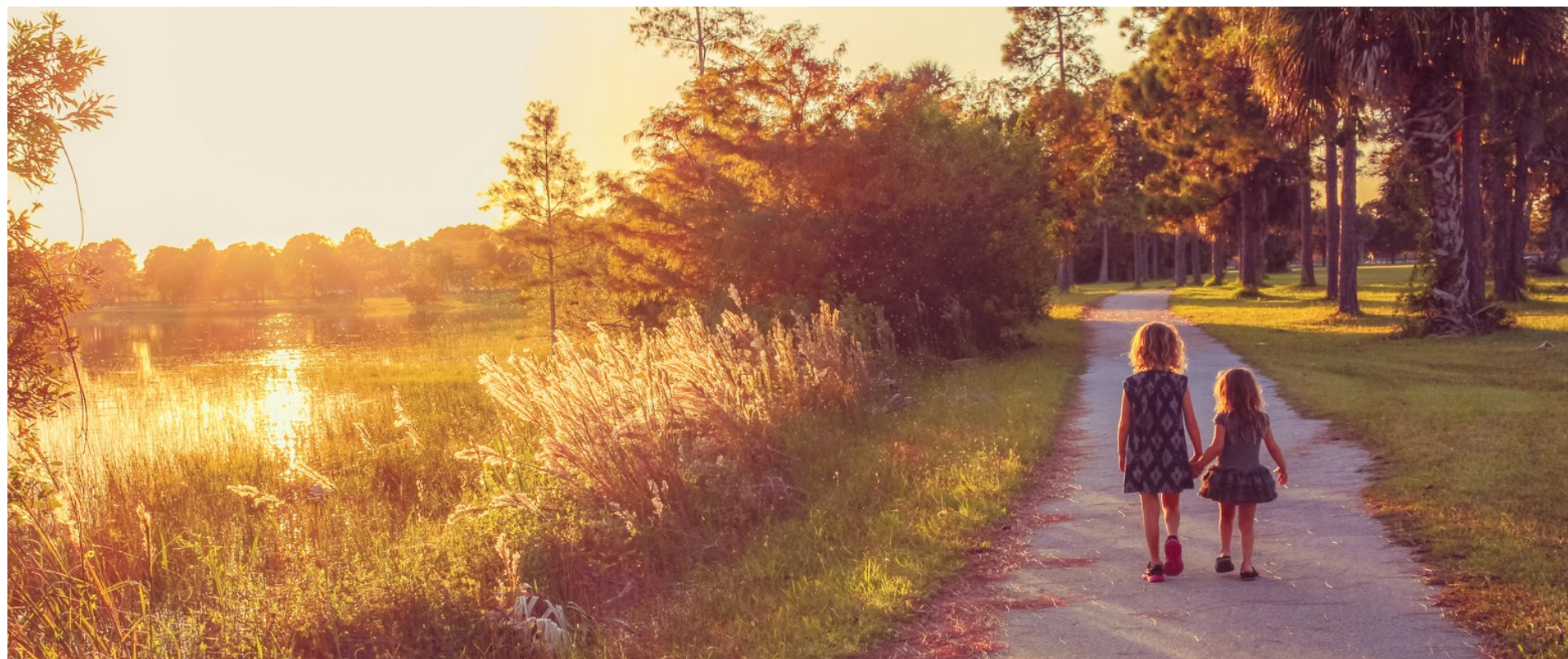




Stay in the moment



Breathe



We are in this together

Evaluation Survey Link

https://uwyo.sjc1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1CcxblkyjdfGPzg



Contact information

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Next Session:

Taking Care of the Caregiver

December 8th, 2021 @ 10:30 am MTS

Topic: Making it a great Season for All

Speaker: Dr. Heidi Maxwell

Contact information

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Wyoming Dementia Together Caregiver Network

November 24th, 2021

no session Happy Thanksgiving

December 8th, 2021

Holidays: Making it a great Season for All

December 22nd, 2021

Celebrating the Caregiver

Happy New Year!!!!

January 26th, 2022

Module 1 - Driving and Dementia

http://www.uwyo.edu/wycoa/educational_and_training_opportunities/wyoming-dementia-together.html



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