



*A
Merry Christmas
For
Carers??*



This booklet has been created just for you!

Having gone through a journey with my husband diagnosed with Young Onset Alzheimer's Disease and learned a lot around how to deal with the Christmas Season, I decided to share these with you so that YOUR Christmas can be a time of greater joy and peace.

It's that time of year again!

The Season of PEACE and Goodwill!

If you are a Carer, part of you may be dreading the thought of Christmas.

- How do I cope with my role as a carer and pleasing the family around me?
- How do I make Christmas a time of joy and fun without disrupting the routine of the one I am caring for?
- How do I do Christmas if they are in a Care Home?

I love Christmas with all the hustle and bustle of December, the Christmas lights everywhere, giving gifts, mince pies and Christmas pudding and being around family and friends. However





It was my husband's first Christmas at Princess Christian Care Home, following admission in the November due to Young Onset Alzheimer's Disease behavioural issues and over two years of not sleeping at night. I had needed to be very sensitive about where we were spending Christmas and dealt with it by suggesting we had Christmas lunch at the Care Home as they were offering to put it on for us.

Christmas day dawned and I got ready to go and visit wearing suitable Christmas attire. I arrived at around 11 am and joined in carol singing before lunch which my husband seemed to enjoy. I then took him out to the visitors room in reception so that we could call family members for a festive chat. That went well and we returned to his unit and took our place for lunch.

Prawn Cocktail was the starter and very delicious it was too - chef and his team had amazing talent. This was followed by a typical english Turkey Dinner. I avoided pulling crackers or party poppers as he was hypersensitive to noise as many with Alzheimer's Disease can be.

Then it all started!! Suddenly cutlery was thrown down on his plate which he pushed away amidst a tyraid of abuse and swearing as he stormed out of the dining room. "Are you alright Sylvia?" family at the next table asked. "Yes, I am fine" I responded, still in shock really!

I allowed the staff to calm him down as I did not want to exacerbate his obvious anger and confusion with the events. I left soon after lunch so that he could become settled and made a decision to visit the following day.

When I got back home I had a moment of great insight! Yes, I thought I was doing him a favour by calling family, when in actual fact it was the last thing I should have done. It had aroused confusion and a wondering why he was there - after all said and done, this was barely eight weeks since admission and he still thought he would be coming home!



So, here I am at home, reflecting on the whole Christmas thing with those on the Alzheimers/ Dementia journey. Remembering his last two Christmas's at home where I created a quiet, peaceful and cosy time for the two of us.

He loved this and happily shared the experience with others. It was as if he felt secure and safe.

We had no angry outbursts and he enjoyed his Christmas Fayre and film watching – good old classic movies on DVD and Christmas Folk Songs from his CD's and You Tube.

In the Care Home they did their very best for them but was it all too much??

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

How do you create a Christmas on their terms?

Typical Things to Avoid –

- Excessive Noise as many are hypersensitive to sounds
- A change in routine which causes confusion and agitation
- Too much of sugary foods and drinks which cause hyperactivity that could lead to aggressive behaviour
- Lot's of people around all at once – the brain neurons can't cope with trying to create positive pathways
- Overloading with gifts as they will lose interest and get confused
- Taking them to what are now unfamiliar surroundings as again they will be confused and agitated



A Few Tips for Creating a Merry Christmas

- Remember they may have loved traditional Christmas music and may have gone to sing carols at church or in their town
- Keep everything simple and as normal a routine as possible
- Have a year without Crackers and lots of unfamiliar decorations on the dining table
- If necessary avoid alcoholic drinks – check their medication and doctors recommendations
- Maybe spread the festive season out and avoid the whole family being around together on Christmas day, and warn them that all must seem familiar and within their “norm”
- Remember Christmas day is like any other in terms of their behaviour and familiar routine



**I Choose Peace
All is Well in My World**

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