

# Senior Insights

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Caregiver Support Information meetings are held monthly:

Andrews Senior Center—  
3rd Tuesday @ 1:00

Big Spring Senior Center—  
2nd Tuesday @ 10:30

Fort Stockton Senior Center—  
2nd Wednesday @ 10:30

Dawson County Senior Center,  
Lamesa—3rd Tuesday @ 10:00

Memorial Health Care Center—  
Seminole—1st Wednesday @ 10:30

Manor Park, Midland—  
Last Thursday @ 10:00 and 2:00

Midland/Odessa—  
Parkinson's Caregivers -  
Call for Details

Midland Lutheran Church  
The Patio—2nd Thursday @ 2:00

Ward County Senior Center,  
Monahans—3rd Thursday @ 10:00

Odessa Regional Medical Center-  
South Campus  
4th Wednesday @ 2:00

Courtyard at Parks, Odessa—  
4th Tuesday @ 2:00 PM

Pecos Senior Citizens Center—  
2nd Wednesday @ 1:00

Rankin Senior Center—  
Call for Details

Martin County Senior Center,  
Stanton—2nd Tuesday @ 1:00

Permian Basin Aging Advisory  
Council Meetings are held at  
10:00am on the following dates:

February 20, 2019, May 15, 2019,  
August 21, 2019, November 20,  
2019

at the Permian Basin Regional  
Planning Commission



# 2019 OPEN ENROLLMENT

**Open Enrollment for Medicare Part D and Medicare Advantage  
Plans began October 15, 2018 and will end December 7, 2018**

Now is the time for Medicare beneficiaries to review, compare and/or make changes for the 2019 plan year. If an individual needs assistance, please call the Area Agency on Aging and schedule an appointment.

When calling our agency, the Medicare beneficiary should provide their Medicare card information and a list of current medications.

Remember, it is always best to compare plans every year as plans often change!

For more information, call Patti Lindsey or Valeria Loera at 432-563-1061.



Funded by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission

# HEALTHY CAREGIVING DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Holidays bring out the best and worst in us. Just the thought of festive gatherings surrounded by the people you love most may elicit warm feelings inside. For others, anticipation of the holidays creates an internal feeling resembling a knotted rope. This latter reaction is more common among caregivers. If you are like the average caregiver, you love certain aspects about the holidays but dread others. Many caregivers are perpetually tired from the emotional and physical demands that result from caring for their loved one. Just the thought of your normal routine plus decorating the house, attending special events, shopping for gifts, and preparing special food for the holidays can be overwhelming.

But what if you had more control over the events, expectations, and relationships that often make holiday times so stressful? This could make a huge difference in the way you and your loved one experience the season. It might even transform the holidays into a season of celebration instead of one to simply endure. It requires exercising some choices you may not be accustomed to. But these can be done with some deliberate effort.

Here are some helpful suggestions to help make this holiday season a joyous, healthful and manageable one for you and your loved one.

**Set realistic expectations for yourself and your loved one** The starting point for not feeling controlled by many holiday demands is to decide what you and your loved one want. How many events, if any, can you both attend or host without overdoing it? Who are the people you most want to be with? What contributions are you capable of making to group needs such as food, drink and gifts? These are basic questions that most caregivers don't ask themselves. Instead of making decisions that are in their best interest, most wait for others to tell them where to go, what to bring, whose coming, and so on. This year, give yourself permission to say 'no' to unwanted demands and stick with it.

**Let others know when you need help** Caregivers typically try to do everything themselves. But the holidays are times when there are usually an abundance of family and friends who are eager to help. If you want help with caregiving responsibilities, such as time away for relaxation or an extra hand or two in the kitchen, don't be afraid to ask. Not only does this help you, but it can be very stimulating and enjoyable for your loved one to have others to interact with and share in his or her care.

**Express your emotions with family and friends** The holidays can trigger emotions ranging from joy to depression in caregivers. A strong sense of loss may work its way into your life during the holidays. It might involve coming to grips with the permanent loss of your loved one's mental or physical abilities. Or perhaps you have a strong feeling that this may be your loved one's last holiday. Maybe it is the loss of your own freedom with caregiver responsibilities that hits hardest during the holidays. Regardless, talk with others about how you feel. Don't expect them to intuitively know. By verbally expressing your feelings you lighten your emotional burden and give others a chance to reach out to you for a change.

**Take time out for yourself** Everyone seems extra busy during the holidays but for caregivers this can literally mean no rest from morning to night. Start with the essentials: get adequate sleep, eat well and take time on most days for some physical activity. If possible, get out of the house for brief periods to maintain perspective. Consider shopping online or by catalogue for many of your gifts this holiday season. Then use the extra time and energy you would have spent fighting traffic and standing in check-out lines on taking better care of yourself.

**Practice rituals that you and your loved one find meaningful** Rituals are important ways to add meaning to your holidays. Yet it's very easy for the busyness of the holidays to squeeze out any real meaning in the season. Practice rituals that you and your loved one find meaningful, even if no one else is there to share it. This might involve a favorite holiday meal, listening to a song together, visiting a place with special memories for you both, etc. It can also involve family and friends. And don't be afraid to create new rituals as old ones may have painful memories attached to them.

**Celebrate what you and your loved one have right now** Caregiving often involves a continual loss of things you want to hold onto. The feeling that life is slipping through your fingers can create a true sense of helplessness. When we experience this helplessness, it is a sign that we are either trying to recover the past or predict the future. Both cause us undue anxiety because there is little we can do about either. But you can address what's happening in the present moment. Celebrate what you and your loved one share right now, even though it's not what you would ultimately prefer. Try to let go of what was or what could be and make the most of what you still have.

It really boils down to making choices. You only have a limited amount of time, energy and resources available. The question is: how are you and your loved one going to spend these? With a little planning and clear communication with friends or family on your intentions, it's possible to celebrate the holiday, care for your loved one, and take care of yourself.

*Original article: <https://www.mentalhelp.net/blogs/healthy-caregiving-during-the-holidays/>*

**For more information, contact Susan Frederickson, Caregiver Program Specialist with the Area Agency on Aging at (432) 563-1061.**

## 5 Tips for Spreading Joy to Nursing Home Residents During the Holidays

The holidays are meant to be a time of happiness and high spirits, and for many of us, they are. But we oftentimes take for granted the love and festivities that we experience come December. For residents in a nursing home, finding that joy and festive spirit can be a lot harder. They are more cut off from the world and not living with family anymore can make the holidays an especially dreary time. But you don't need to be family to help.

Here are some ideas to help you to spread joy around your local nursing home and nursing homes across the country:

### Contact Your Local Nursing Home

It can be hard to come up with an effective idea to help brighten up nursing home resident's days by yourself. For that reason, it is a good idea to get in contact with the faculty at your local nursing home. They can tell you what is really effective at boosting spirits and give you ideas that are not only allowed but needed. Maybe it is collecting some small gifts for everyone. Maybe it is just coming over to help out and spend time with the residents. If what will spread joy is something such as a performance, see if you can organize a group of kids to put on a play or sing Christmas carols. You can even try to organize a field trip to a local production of a holiday performance.

### Gift Campaigns

See if your community has a charity organization tailored for the seniors living in the area. They may be put on at churches, town halls, or rec centers and often the gift ideas they provide are tailored to a specific individual. Pick up a personalized list and compile a collection of items that will help to brighten up someone's day. If your community does not participate in a charity, there are dozens of online communities that help deliver gifts to seniors nationwide such as Mercy Housing or Project Just Because.

### Throw a Party

Whether it is a celebration with music and food, a holiday movie night, or a card decorating get together, a party is a great way to lift everyone's spirits. Contact your local nursing home to see what is allowed and when the best time would be and start organizing. Maybe you can put on an organic cookie making and decorating party or create a festive music playlist and buffet style meal. Holiday card decorating is a great way to bring everyone together. It is also a good chance to make their loved ones happy. You can do something as simple as making a small collection of holiday movies and have a showing. This will allow everyone to just spend time with one another and get into the holiday mood. If possible invite the residents family to these events and make sure that everyone knows about it. While a party itself will help to boost spirits, it is guaranteed that a visit from family will boost them even more.

### Bring in a Gift

It doesn't have to be big. In fact, it's better that it isn't. Oftentimes the most simple things will make people the happiest during the holidays. Buy a collection of lotions or gloves and hand them out around your nursing home. Put together a large collection of fresh fruit to bring some color and sweetness to their palette. Even a collection of personalized holiday cards are enough to bring a smile to someone's face. Work together with some of the faculty to make a collection of cards for each of the residents. The size of your gift doesn't matter. All that matters is that the residents feel remembered and just a little bit happier when they receive them.

### Make a New Friend

Nothing you do has to be tangible. Talking is one of the best gifts you can give anyone around the holidays. Start coming by once or twice a week and make friends with the seniors living there. Spend an hour or two talking to them and really engage in what they're saying. You may come to value them as much as you value one of your friends and it is likely that they will feel the same about you.

*Original article: <https://www.theseniorcarenetwork.org/5-tips-spreading-joy-nursing-home-residents-holidays/>*

**To learn how you can make a difference in the lives of nursing home and assisted living facility residents, please contact Carolyn Torres, Managing Local Ombudsman at (432) 563-1061.**

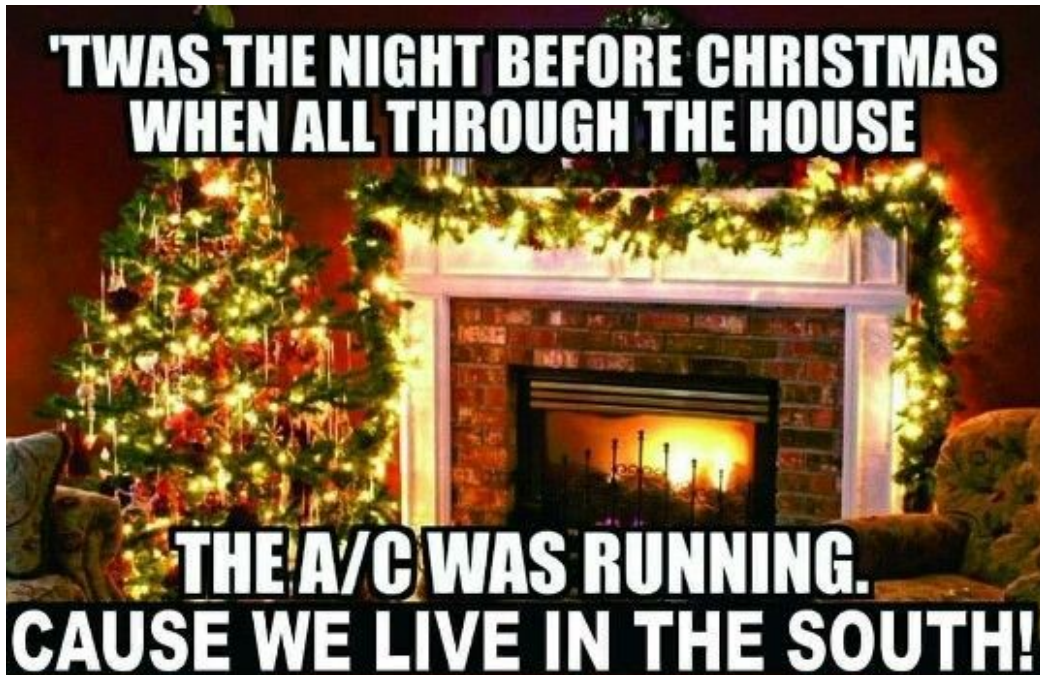


of the Permian Basin Regional Planning Commission  
funded by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission  
P.O. Box 60660  
2910 LaForce Blvd.  
Midland, TX 79711

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