

CONNECTIONS

WINTER 2020

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Enjoying the Holidays

The holidays can be a time of joy, laughter, and special memories. We all have traditions that help us enjoy the holidays. We may have a family meal, Christmas carol, or other traditions that make this time feel special. However, the holidays can also feel overwhelming if there are too many events, loud gatherings, or other stressful reasons. The way we celebrate can look different for everyone, so it is important to consider what helps you enjoy the holidays while living with dementia.

This writer met with some members of the Client Advisory Group and had a conversation about how they have made changes in the way they celebrate the holidays as persons living with dementia. The group shared some of their suggestions for enjoying the holidays. One member suggested to have pot luck dinners for the holidays rather than cooking everything yourself. This allows you to enjoy the meal and relax with family instead of having to stress about cooking. As well, it can be helpful to have the dinner at a family member's house rather than hosting. When you visit at someone else's house, you can bring snacks. One individual shared that she enjoys bringing snacks with her to celebrations because she feels like she is contributing to the event.

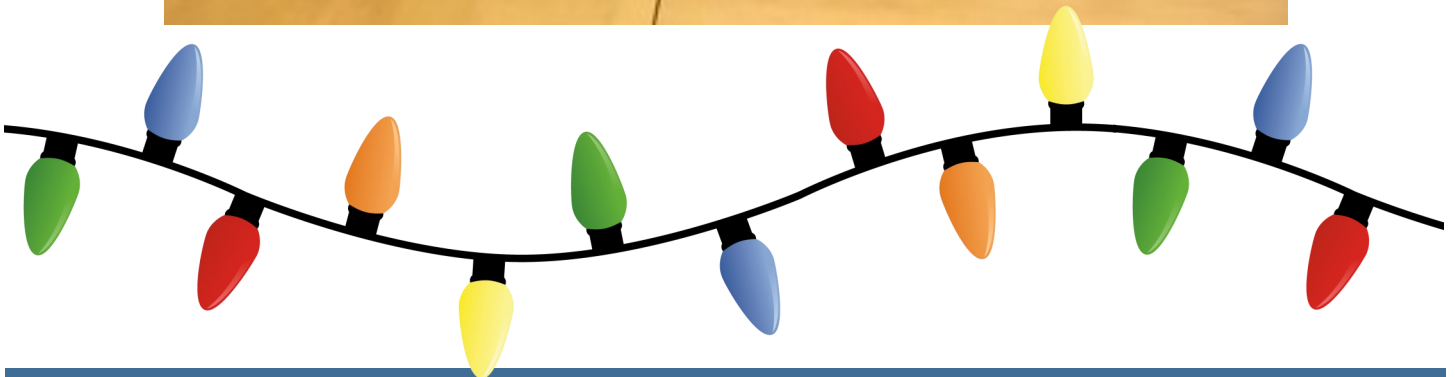
The holidays can also be quite loud when a lot of people are visiting. This may feel overwhelming. The Client Advisory Group members shared that it is helpful for them to find a quiet spot and take a break. If you know where you will be visiting for the holidays, it can be helpful to plan ahead and know that there will be a quiet room or a quiet space available for you to sit and relax. As well, enjoying the company of a smaller group of immediate family can help make the holidays feel more special and relaxed.

Enjoying the Holidays *(con't)*



However, if you are at a large gathering and forgetting names, the Client Advisory Group provided some suggestions to help. Using humour and making a joke can be useful for alleviating stressful situations. As well, you can try other terms of endearment rather than names, such as “buddy.” Additionally, members discussed that it is helpful to be open and honest with family and friends. Never be ashamed of what is happening. Do not apologize, rather just provide an explanation if you are having trouble with your memory.

It is helpful to remember that the ways we celebrate the holidays are very personal, and what works well for others may be different than what works well for you. It is important to know yourself well and plan ahead so you can enjoy the holidays.





Meaningful Activities and Connection During COVID-19

In the time of physical and social distancing, it is important that we continue to connect and engage in meaningful activities. Meaningful activities can be used as therapeutic tools to improve our wellbeing. Recent research has described ways in which activities can be meaningful for persons living with dementia (Tierney & Beattie, 2020).

Dr. Tierney and Dr. Beattie shared that there are 5 attributes that make activities meaningful for older adults living with dementia, including activities that are:

- **Enjoyable.**

Activities are meaningful if you feel enjoyment. You may feel pleasure when looking forward to the activity or enjoy the outcome of the activity. You may also enjoy the activity if: it relaxes you, it is a hobby, or it is connected to your identity.

- **Suited to individual's skills, abilities, and preferences.**

Activities that fit with your abilities are great for feeling competent and independent.

- **Related to personally relevant goals.**

Activities are meaningful if they are personally fulfilling and align with your own goals. This helps provide feelings of self-worth and accomplishment.

- **Engaging.**

Activities are engaging if they are interesting, require genuine involvement and attention.

- **Related to an aspect of identity.**

Activities are meaningful when they can be linked to your identity. Activities that allow you to express yourself provides meaning.

This writer asked some members of the Client Advisory Group to share some of the activities that they find meaningful. They shared enjoyment for crosswords, folding laundry, collecting recipes, and gardening. Members shared that these activities help to relax the brain. Members also discussed listening to nice instrumental music. They suggested closing your eyes and just listening to the sounds of the music. Another member discussed her enjoyment for card-making. As a person living with dementia, she has made changes to her card-making to make it simpler, but shared that her joy for the activity is the same. It is valuable to do what you can and continue to create these opportunities for joy.

Meaningful activities are very personal. For some ideas on what you can do, please check out our website for a variety of virtual activities at: www.alzheimerniagara.ca/online

Source: Tierney, L., & Beattie, E. (2020). Enjoyable, engaging and individualised: A concept analysis of meaningful activity for older adults with dementia. *International Journal of Older People Nursing*, e12306.



Bea's Vegetable Dish

Ingredients:

- 1 bag of frozen California mixed vegetables
- 1 can of creamed soup (mushroom, chicken, or celery)
- Cheddar cheese



Directions:

1. Thaw frozen vegetables overnight.
2. Drain the vegetables and put it in a bowl.
3. Add soup and 1 cup of grated cheese to the vegetables.
4. Stir and put it in a casserole dish. Cover the dish.
5. Put it in the oven at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.





Silent Night

Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child,
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace!

Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,
Christ, the Saviour, is born!

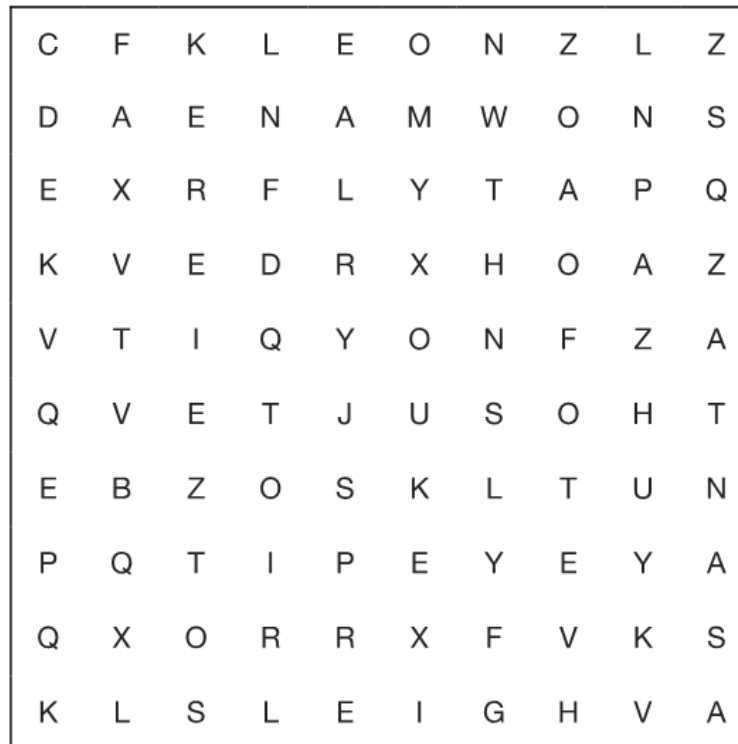
Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.





Christmas Word Search

Instructions: Try to find all of the hidden Christmas words in the word search puzzle below.
(Words can be spelled forwards, backwards, diagonally, up, or down.)



Word List

CARD	SANTA
FESTIVE	SLEIGH
FROSTY	SNOWMAN
NOEL	YULE



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Christmas Word Search SOLUTION

Instructions: Try to find all of the hidden Christmas words in the word search puzzle below.
(Words can be spelled forwards, backwards, diagonally, up, or down.)



Word List

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| CARD | SANTA |
| FESTIVE | SLEIGH |
| FROSTY | SNOWMAN |
| NOEL | YULE |



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Baking Cookies

Use the clues to fill in the crossword.



ACROSS

- 3. Crumbly cookie
- 5. Palm product
- 7. Orchid extract
- 8. Dried fruit
- 10. Thick syrup
- 13. Twice-baked cookie
- 14. Baking staple
- 15. Miller’s product

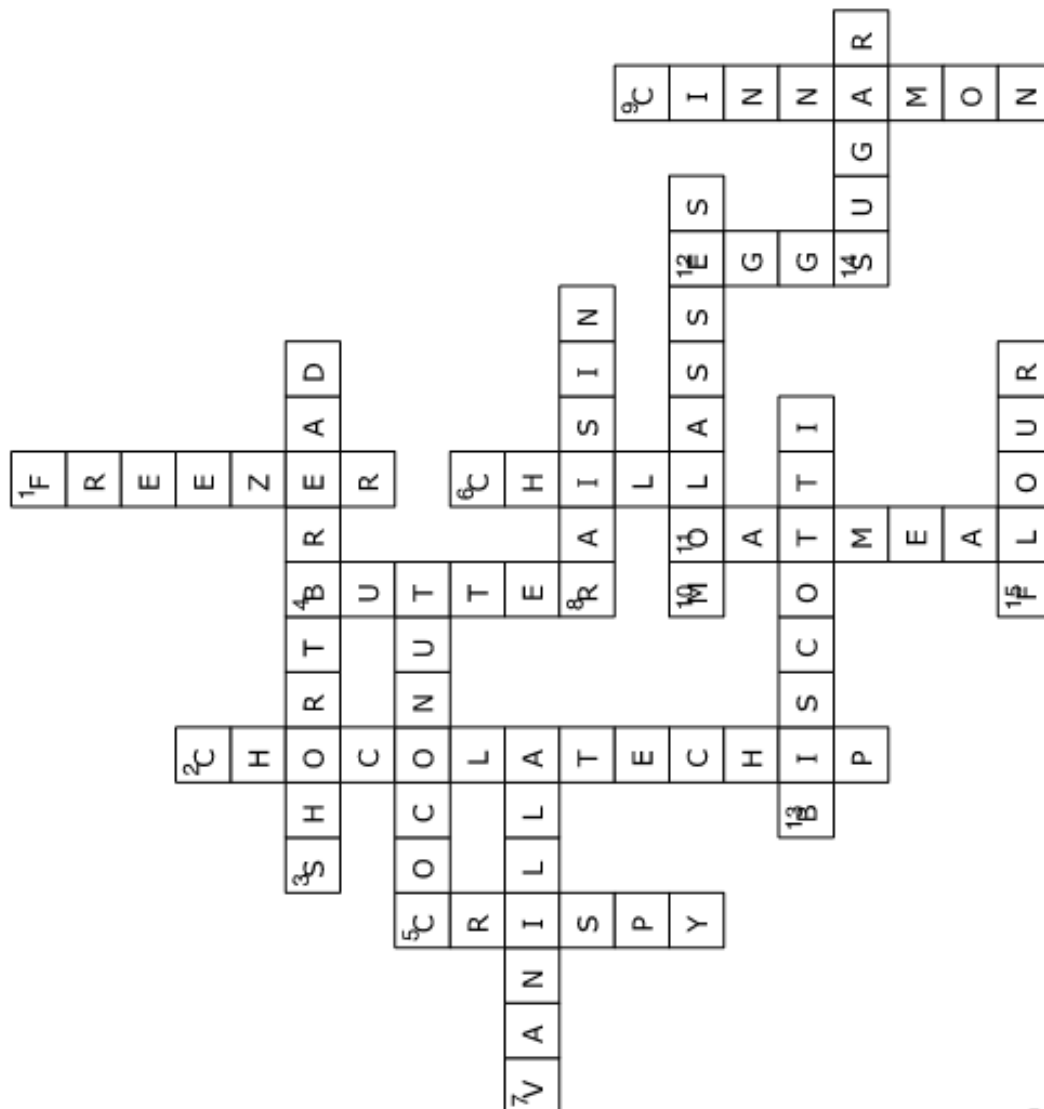
DOWN

- 1. Cold storage
- 2. Popular cookie
- 4. Creamy dairy product
- 5. Having a brittle surface
- 6. Make cooler
- 9. Reddish spice
- 11. Goes with raisins
- 12. Baker’s dozen



Baking Cookies

(solution)





- The tradition of Christmas trees goes back to ancient Egyptians and Romans, who marked the winter solstice with evergreens as a reminder that spring would return.
- Jingle Bells was originally a Thanksgiving song, called “One Horse Open Sleigh” and was created for a church concert. In 1857, the song was re-published and renamed Jingle Bells, and eventually became a popular Christmas song.
- Candy canes originated in Germany. Originally, candy canes were given to children to keep them quiet during church services. In 1847, a German-Swedish immigrant decorated his tree with candy canes, and they became popular as a Christmas candy.
- Every year since 1947, Norway provides the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square, London. They donate the tree in gratitude for Britain’s support for Norway during WWII.
- In Germany, Poland, and Ukraine, finding a spider or a spider’s web on a Christmas tree is believed to be good luck.
- “Silent Night” is the most-recorded Christmas song in history, with over 733 different versions copyrighted since 1978.
- Christmas trees usually grow for about 15 years before they’re sold. On average, 3 Christmas trees are planted to replace each one harvested.
- In 1999, residents of Maine, USA built the world’s biggest snowman. He stood at 113 feet tall.





“May your walls know joy, may every room hold laughter, and every window open to great possibility.”

- Mary Anne Radmacher



Letter From the Editor



Welcome to the Christmas edition of Connections. Thank you kindly to Cynthia Krawczuk, Communications Coordinator, and Gina Bendo, Wellness and Early Stage Program Coordinator, for their hard work and support with this newsletter. As well, thank you immensely to the Client Advisory Group for providing such valuable information that truly helped guide this newsletter. Your contributions are very appreciated.

With COVID-19 present in our lives, the holidays are being enjoyed and celebrated differently this year. We hope this newsletter has provided some information on how to enjoy the holidays while living with dementia. We also hope you enjoy the brain games and other special holiday information.

It has been my privilege and great joy to work on this season's newsletter. I have learned so much while working on this newsletter. I am very grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the process. I truly hope you enjoyed it!

If you have any ideas for the newsletter or wish to be interviewed for a feature article, please contact Gina at 905-687-6856, extension 543.

We wish you and your family a happy holiday season.

Warmest wishes,
Tierney Race
Program Assistant

