

Celebrating the Holidays when a Loved one is on Hospice

by Seema Cisneros, LCSW | Bereavement Counselor

For many, the holidays are the most wonderful time of the year. Traveling, visiting family and friends, decorating, indulging in traditions — it truly is the season for spending time with loved ones and making memories. But for families that have a loved one on hospice service, this may not always be the case. Whether you're watching a loved one's health decline, preparing for visitors or making drastic changes to your celebration to accommodate your loved one, the holidays can take a major toll on you as a family caregiver. In addition, the current COVID-19 crisis is creating challenges that can feel overwhelming for many families.

While there are certainly challenges you will have to face, there are still ways you and your family can celebrate the season with your loved one who is ill. Below are some ideas to consider this holiday season:

- ▶ **Modify your expectations and traditions.** This holiday season will look different, and that's OK. Adjust your expectations about how the holiday typically goes, and don't get too wrapped up in the small details. Modify the traditions you're able to, so you and your loved one can still enjoy the special season. If your loved one is ill and not feeling well, they may not need or be up for spending as much time together as they normally would, and that's OK. Focus on making the most of the time you do get to share.
- ▶ **Practice rituals that your loved one and you find meaningful.** Rituals are important ways to add meaning to your holidays. This might include a favorite holiday meal, listening to a song together, or visiting a place with special memories for you both. It can also involve family and friends. Create new rituals as well.
- ▶ **Bring the holidays to your loved one.** If your loved one can't get around much, bring the holiday to them. It's OK if they can't leave their bed or the house. You can create meaningful memories by bringing the holiday joy to them. Decorate their room or home with a few special items that hold meaning for them, or simply string up some beautiful holiday lights. A little tinsel will go a long way to making your loved one feel the cheer of the season.
- ▶ **Familiarize others with the situation.** The holidays are full of emotions, so it can help to let family and friends know what to expect. Arrange for a group discussion via telephone, video call or email family and friends to discuss holiday celebrations in advance. Make sure that everyone understands the caregiving situation, the safety precautions you're taking to help keep your loved one healthy and has realistic expectations about what you can and cannot do.



NEWSLETTER

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- ▶ **Allow time to be present.** This can be an emotional time for everyone, including your loved one. Make sure to allow for moments of peace and rest, so that everyone has an opportunity to recharge. Scheduling multiple things in a day doesn't necessarily mean the more meaningful the time will be. Think quality time over the quantity of time. Just being present with one another might be what everyone needs.
- ▶ **Make time for yourself.** This will help you stay healthy, recharge, and avoid caregiver burnout. 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. Do something kind and uplifting for yourself, perhaps something you used to enjoy but haven't done for a while.
- ▶ **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.
- ▶ **Enjoy the sounds of the season.** Music can be therapeutic and can have a positive effect on a person's overall well-being. Play your loved one's favorite holiday music in the background for a portion of your time together. Listening to their favorite tracks can bring back happy memories from past holidays.
- ▶ **Share favorite family memories and stories.** Plan to have everyone share a favorite holiday memory or story as you gather. Your family's laughter and visiting back and forth can provide a sense of normalcy and comfort for the person who is ill. In some situations, your family member might not be alert or able to respond verbally, but research has shown and we have witnessed with our own hospice patients that even while someone is nonresponsive they can hear their surroundings. It's OK to share moments of laughter, together even if your loved one can't respond. It will provide comfort for them.
- ▶ **Connect through technology.** Use video call software like Zoom or Facetime to gather virtually. Since it can be difficult to have conversations with larger groups over video, adding structure to the call can help. Play a trivia game, sing carols, cook/bake a special recipe together, or share pictures from past gatherings. Use video to capture and digitally send special moments, such as children opening gifts.
- ▶ **Make an action plan.** Before that special holiday arrives, make a list of people to call when you need support and places you can go for solace and healing. Keep expectations of yourself and the holidays realistic. *Usually the anticipation of the holiday is worse than the day itself.*

If you would like more information or would like to join a support group, please call Silverado at (949) 240-7744.

Human Rights

by Lauren Marilley, RN | Patient Care Manager

December is a month that celebrates human rights. On December 10th, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly created a declaration that set the standard of human rights (“Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, 2021). This declaration has been translated into over 500 languages and has been the cornerstone of human rights treaties around the world (“Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, 2021). This declaration has 30 articles that cover equality, freedom without discrimination, no torture or inhuman treatment, and fair trial to name a few. Healthcare has something similar that is called Patient Rights, which has similarities to the declaration of human rights, this is very important for hospice care.

Each patient has the right to be treated with respect, be able to obtain their medical records, keep their medical records private, make or refuse treatment, have informed consent, and have the right to make decisions about end-of-life care. Their end-of-life care is in the form of a POLST or Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment. This is where the patient states whether or not they want CPR, how much medical intervention they want to have performed (full treatment, selective,



or comfort), artificial nutrition, and if there is an advanced directive. Once the patient chooses what they want the physician signs it making it an order that other healthcare professionals have to follow.

Every person has basic human rights that have been established by the United Nations, every country that follows the declaration has even further specified additional rights for people and patients. It is important in hospice to treat each person with respect, dignity, and advocate for their wishes.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Retrieved December 1, 2021 from <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

Awareness Dates to Remember

- ▶ Dec 2-8 | National Grief Awareness Week
- ▶ Dec 5 | International Volunteers Day
- ▶ Dec 7 | National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- ▶ Dec 10 | Human Rights Day
- ▶ Dec 10 | International Animal Rights Day
- ▶ Dec 12 | International Day of Neutrality

Memory Catchers

every life is a Story...

Silverado Volunteers capture precious memories through stories shared by our patients on services.

This unique program introduces Silverado volunteers to get to know a patient through a series of visits. During the visits the volunteer will build rapport with the patient in order to customize interview questions to ask during the video recording. It is also encouraged for family to gather photos to share in the video. Once the video footage has been taken it is then edited by a video editor volunteer. The final product is then presented to the family and patient in the form of a flash drive, to be enjoyed and passed on.

Volunteers typically visit with their patient/family anywhere from 1 to 2 hours on a weekly basis, services are based on availability.

To learn more about volunteer services like the Memory Catcher, or how to become a volunteer, please contact:

Valerie Lomeli, Volunteer Manager Office
at (888) 328-5660



CONTACT US

24-hour line: (888) 328-5660

Referral line: (800) 507-9726

Fax: (949) 653-0452

Volunteer inquiries: (888) 328-5660

Visit us online with our 24/7 Live Chat Line: [silveradohospice.com](https://www.silveradohospice.com)



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