

The Uncensored Caregiver Podcast

with Master Certified Coach Iryna Ishchenko

Episode 35: To bring or not to bring?

Iryna Ishchenko [00:00:00]:

To bring or not to bring family members with dementia to a holiday event is a tough decision. Whether this family member doesn't live in the same household with you and you want to bring them in, or they leave with You and you want to bring them to the family event hosted somewhere else. There are some questions to be answered to decide what would be the best for our elder family members with dementia. Let's talk about it. Have you noticed that all the movies about the holiday season are about Families getting together and having a holy jolly fun time. For many caregivers I know, and it's a lot of us, The season of holidays can be really triggering if that date on the calendar is a reminder of what you can't have anymore. The whole family is not gathering in your parents' house, and your mom doesn't cook a storm anymore. Instead, You might be figuring out if it is safe to bring your parents over without the fear their condition might worsen and the whole day will turn into a nightmare.

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If your parents can stay awake during the dinner, if they can recognize their grandchildren and would not be hitting on your guests, if they get confused and tired, if they get aggressive or terrified, or if whatever else might happen. The last time we had my in laws for Thanksgiving was 3 years ago. I cooked up a lot. Cooking a lot for the people I love might or might not be the favorite part of the holidays for me. We brought them over and envisioned How we would spend the cozy 5 day weekend together, sharing stories, going for walks in the woods, playing games, watching movies, The usual family activities together. The only part of that plan that happened was me

Cooking a lot. The rest, not so. The change of the familiar place and the The average routine didn't work well for both of my parents in law.

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Both of them were confused and tired. That made them even more confused When they try to figure out things around the house, and it was not the first time when they were at our house, They got more exhausted because of being confused all the time. And by the end of their 1st day with us, they just wanted to go home. We haven't brought them over since then. Logically, it's the best thing to do because we love them. Emotionally, it's a very hard thing to do because we love them. How to decide what to do then? The first question I would like you to answer is why you want to bring your family member with dementia to your home. Most often, we make decisions about holiday celebrations based on what we've done in the past, what became a family tradition, and What we have enjoyed and want to repeat.

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If you want to bring your your loved one with the dementia to a family event Because it has always been done, because it's the right thing to do, because you want to see the whole family together Or anything else along these lines, your decision might not be based on the best interests of your person with dementia, and that's the recipe for the disaster. It's based on what would feel good for you, not what would be good for them. Most people with dementia don't do well with changes in their routines or environment. They get confused, and that leads to agitation and noticeable decline in cognitive functions. Take that into consideration, please. To plan the visit anywhere, you have to consider what would be their Parents before the family event, during, and a few days after. Do they know where they are being taken and why? Are they looking forward to it or being frightened to leave the familiar environment? How long is the journey, And do they have this stamina for it? It's also a good idea to have a plan for how you are going to bring them back to where they reside. Do you have a plan in case they don't want to go back? If they regularly talk About wanting to go home, wanting to leave their place of residence, or complaining about it, you need to have a plan.

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Saying it's time for you to go back most likely would not work. You have to have something enticing for them, something they would think of as a fun activity to do even if, its final stop is at their place of residence. And if the transition between the homes is inevitable, be prepared that your loved one Might be distressed and cranky for a few days. They need time to adjust. And if you Expect that your loved one will be difficult after the transition. When that happens, you won't be disappointed about their behavior because everything happens exactly as you expected it. Then There is a challenge of what will be happening during the gathering. We try to recreate the same experience for them So they would be enjoying them again.

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And we think that for our elder relatives to enjoy the celebration, they need to participate in it. Do they? For example, a caregiver shared with me recently how she and her mom Always went to local holiday fair. It's a big event in their town with a lot of arts and crafts people selling their creations. Wine tasting from the local wineries like music, food vendors, and so on. They have always loved going to that yearly event, And it was their special time together. It's kind of bonding time, catching up time, and it was a big part of the holiday celebrations for them. Naturally, the caregiver wanted to come to this event again to continue the tradition and to keep, mom participating in the normal social activities. But mom Was all the different? The whole affair was nosy and scary for her.

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It was too many people and too many action around her, and she was crying to be taken home. It was heartbreaking. Because you want to do your best, You try to maintain the traditions and do something you and your parents would enjoy when it turns out that everything you have planned is making things worse. It also can be confusing because you have heard from everyone and everywhere, including me, that elders with dementia thrive on consistency. And when you do what is consistent. It

doesn't work as expected. How do you know? Pay attention to your loved one body language to see What they enjoy now? What makes them smile? What makes them happy? What makes them content? See what adjustments have to be made to make the whole experience enjoyable for everyone. It's okay to put aside your old traditions and make new ones.

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It's okay to do something completely different. It's okay if others disagree. As a matter of fact, it's okay for others to think whatever they want to think about your decisions. The guiding principles here is, What would be the best for your loved one based on their current condition and based on what you Can handle yourself. There is no right or wrong answer to the question, should you bring your family members with dementia to holiday events or not? You decide. And you also decide that your decision is the best possible in the current circumstances. Be kind to yourself, and drop your expectations to be perfect and make the holidays perfect. And if it's going to be the 1st holiday without your loved ones, my heart goes to you.

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It may not be easy. If you're looking at your calendar and feeling like you need to brace for impact, I am here for you. I know it can be hard to open up to the people around you, and pretty much everything you say only makes things worse. So I'm reaching out and letting you know that I am here for you. You can always reach me at the uncensored caregiver.com, and leave me a message. You can also find the links To schedule in an appointment with me or to download my 10 tips for caregivers to remember so your life doesn't get put on hold in this episode description. When I say we are in this together and you're not alone, I mean it. I'm master coach Irina Ishenko, and next week, we will talk about not wanting to bring your parents with Iryna Ishchenko [00:00:00]:

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