lisaswaythrough.com

Caring for Someone with Dementia This Holiday?

A gentle guide to help you plan ahead, protect your energy, and find the moments that matter.

The holidays may not look the way they used to. That's okay. You don't have to make it perfect, and you don't have to do it alone. Here's how to plan ahead and what to say when the day gets hard.

Plan Ahead

- Protect their routine. Keep meals, rest, and medications on the usual schedule.
- Gather during their best time of day, often late morning or early afternoon.
- Set up a quiet room they can step away to when things get loud.
- Go easy on decorations. Blinking lights and moved furniture can confuse.
- Give visitors a heads-up on what to expect before they arrive.

Protect Your Own Energy

- Say yes to help, and give each person a specific job.
- Let go of traditions that cost more than they give.
- Keep gatherings smaller and shorter than you used to.
- Plan a real break for yourself, even 20 minutes counts.
- Expect mixed feelings. Joy and grief can sit at the same table.

What to Say: Common Moments

These aren't scripts to memorize. They're starting points for family and for your loved one. Use your own voice.

When family wants to test their memory

They say: *"Mom, do you remember me? What's my name?"*

You can say: "Let's skip the quiz. Just tell her who you are. She'll love hearing your voice."

When someone doesn't see the hard days

They say: *"She seems fine to me. Are you sure it's that bad?"*

You can say: "I'm so glad you're seeing a good day. Those are precious. Other days look very different, and I'd love your help on those too."

When your loved one is overwhelmed

They say: *"Who are all these people? I want to go home."*

You can say: "It's a lot today, isn't it? Come sit with me somewhere quiet. I'm right here."

When someone offers to help

They say: *"Just let me know if you need anything."*

You can say: "Thank you, I'd love that. Could you sit with [name] Saturday afternoon so I can get a break?"

Bonus Points: Give Them a Job

People living with dementia often still want to feel useful. Folding napkins, stirring batter, sorting ornaments, or setting out cookies can bring calm and a sense of purpose. It doesn't matter if the napkins come out crooked. Belonging is the point. Pick a simple task with one or two steps and do it side by side.

A final reminder: you don't have to hold the whole holiday together. Some of the best moments won't be the planned ones. A song they still know every word to. A laugh over an old story. Give yourself the same grace you give them. What you're doing is more than enough, and it matters.