



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Helping Caregivers of Dementia Patients Navigate the Holiday Season *-Legacy Community Health Geriatric Psychiatrist Offers Ways to Cope-*

**HOUSTON, TEXAS (Nov. 15, 2023)** – The holiday season is a time of joy, celebration, and quality moments with loved ones. However, for caregivers of dementia patients, the holiday can also bring added stress.

"Providing care for individuals with dementia can be emotionally and physically demanding, and the stress of the holiday season can exacerbate the stress for many families," said Dr. Alexandra Sibley, Legacy Community Health's Geriatric Psychiatrist.

For those new to the caregiver role, this time of year can be highly challenging, especially if you don't know what to expect. To help alleviate some anxiety, Legacy Community Health offers the following insights:

- **Don't take your loved ones' rudeness personally** – Someone with dementia often experiences changes in behavior, including moments of being rude. When this happens, the caregiver needs to remember that these outbursts are not usually directed at the caregiver but are likely the result of cognitive changes associated with the condition. Caregivers should not take these comments personally, but instead, do their best to maintain patience and express empathy for their loved ones.
- **Expect less conversation from your loved one** – As dementia progresses, verbal communication can become more challenging. Caregivers should anticipate that their loved one may engage in few conversations or be more withdrawn from conversations. As a caregiver, it is important to keep in mind that dementia may limit your loved one's ability to communicate as they once did.
- **Consider having quiet, lower-key celebrations** – Celebrating special occasions with a loved one who has dementia may require you to make a shift in traditional festivities. Large gatherings and loud events may overwhelm someone with dementia, so instead, opt for quieter, low-key celebrations that focus on creating intimate and meaningful moments. Examples of low-key celebrations include a cozy dinner at home or a peaceful outing that aligns with the individual's comfort level. By adapting celebrations to your loved one's preferences, you can help them participate in a way that brings them joy without causing stress.
- **Don't be disappointed if your loved one doesn't want to participate** – Fluctuations in mood and cognitive abilities characterize dementia. Caregivers cannot always expect that their loved ones may not always feel up to participating in activities, even those they once enjoyed. Try to remain flexible by offering alternative ways to include your loved one in your celebrations.

If you want to support a friend or family member who serves as the primary caregiver to a dementia patient, below are some suggestions to help them:

- **Offer to take care of the dementia patient for a day** - Caring for someone with dementia is a full-time responsibility and can be emotionally and physically draining. Offering to provide respite care for a day, or even a couple of hours, allows your friend or family member much-needed time to rest and rejuvenate, especially during a hectic time of year.
- **Run errands** – If your friend or family members seem frazzled, running a few errands may assist them immensely. Offer to go to the grocery store, mail packages, or pick up prescriptions. Doing so can relieve the caregiver's stress, allowing them to focus more on providing care and emotional support to their loved ones.
- **Cook a meal** – Preparing meals, especially during the busy holiday season, can be time-consuming and challenging for caregivers, especially when managing the needs of someone with dementia. Providing a home-cooked meal may not only ease their daily responsibilities but also ensure proper nutrition for the caregiver and the person with dementia.

"We understand the unique challenges caregivers of dementia face during the holidays and all year round," said Dr. Sibley. "Legacy Community Health encourages those in caregiver roles to manage their expectations, seek appropriate support, and lean on others during their caregiving journey."

To make an appointment for Legacy's senior care services, call 713-814-3655, or to make an appointment for geriatric psychiatry with Dr. Sibley, call 713-351-7360.

Legacy offers various health care services for senior and their caregivers. For more information, visit <https://www.legacycommunityhealth.org/services/geriatrics/>.

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#### **About Legacy Community Health, Inc.:**

Legacy Community Health Services "(Legacy)" is a full-service network of over 50 community health centers offering primary and specialty care, and pharmacy services in the Texas Gulf Coast region. Legacy has been innovating how comprehensive, quality health care services are provided to underserved communities for over 40 years. As the largest Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Texas, our services and programs are open to all, regardless of the ability to pay, without judgment or exception. Legacy has been a United Way affiliated agency since 1990. To learn more, visit [www.legacycommunityhealth.org](http://www.legacycommunityhealth.org).