

Older adults require addition attention between Thanksgiving, Christmas time

Staff Reports

For the elderly, home for the holidays can be a lonely proposition.

That is why the elderly especially need to connect with other family members, friends or members of church groups or social organizations, says geriatric nurse practitioner Dr. Janet Nussbaum, a professor at the University of South Carolina College of Nursing.

"The time between Thanksgiving and Christmas can be difficult for older

adults. Being connected to a social support system helps them through the holidays," Nussbaum said.

"If older adults are mobile and can get out, they should make plans to take part in holiday activities. If they aren't able to go places, then family members and friends can visit, call or write," she added.

Many elderly may be sad during the holidays, Nussbaum says, because they remember past holidays and the friends and family members who have died or

moved away.

"The holidays remind us of losses, and it's okay to feel sad," Nussbaum said. "We all feel sad from time to time. The elderly should be allowed to say if it is a painful time."

But as long as the person has a good support system and a purpose for getting up each day, he or she probably will not become depressed. "They have gotten old because they are resilient," Nussbaum said.

In spite of busy holiday schedules,

Nussbaum recommends that family members and friends make the commitment this holiday season to share the gift of time throughout the year.

"You don't have to go to great lengths to make a difference in someone's life," Nussbaum said. "Although a personal visit is nice, phone calls, cards and letters also mean a lot to the elderly."

Nussbaum recommends including pictures with cards and letters and taking time to jot down a short story about the picture. The stories can be something

as simple as, "This was Susan's third-grade class picture. It was raining so hard that day that I'm surprised her hair was not more curly!"

Other ideas for spreading holiday cheer to those unable to get out:

■ Give a low maintenance pet. This adds purpose and responsibility to the older adult's life. Small dogs, birds or cats are good choices.

■ Give a plant. Plants don't talk, bite or eat, but they do require attention. Taking care of plants can help the elderly

maintain a sense of worth.

■ A family history. Make an audiotape or videotape of the family's senior member discussing the family's history. This can be given to the one sharing the history and duplicated for other family members.

■ In-home activities. Help a senior do an activity enjoyed earlier in life. For example, if an aunt likes quilting but can no longer sew the pieces together, work out an arrangement to help make the pieces and then have them sewn into a quilt.



WUSC

Interested in reaching the students, faculty and staff of the University of South Carolina every day for almost no cost?

call us today
 @ ←
777-1184
 The Gamecock

ROAD CLOSED

DETOUR →

Not to us!
 We're going straight ahead for treatments and cures for 40 neuromuscular diseases.

MDA
 Muscular Dystrophy Association

1-800-572-1717

People help MDA... because MDA helps people.

Save The People You Call Up To 44%.

For long-distance calls. Savings based on a 3-min. AT&T operator-dialed interstate call.

longsleevevintage @ Moe's

\$6.00

moe levy's
 1300 assembly street