

CARE Compass

Helping Navigate the Later Stages of Dementia



Winter Walkthrough

 Sanders-Brown
Center on Aging

This project was made possible by a generous gift.

The goal of the program is to help provide tools and information so that you can navigate the later stages of dementia. We hope that you find these videos and resources to be helpful and encouraging.

This program is designed to be a guide only for the compassionate care and support of your loved one and is not medical advice. If you have questions or concerns, always check with your doctor.

We also want to acknowledge that late-stage dementia can look very different from person to person. Sometimes the ideas we share may not work or work for a short time. That is okay. No one person is alike, and what works today may not work tomorrow. We hope to provide tools that can be options for you to try.

This guide contains links and other resources that may not be provided by the presenter but are added to the guide to provide additional information and support.

Welcome to a Winter Walkthrough.

Winter is full of quiet snow days. Crackling fires this season invite us to slow down and remember the quiet beauty of the season. As we watch together, there is no need to remember names, dates, or specific events. Instead, enjoy the sights, sounds, and feelings that Winter can bring. A place filled with beauty, color, and the calming presence of nature. As dementia progresses, words and memories may become more difficult to access. Yet the ability to experience joy, comfort, wonder, and connection often remains. The sights, sounds, scents, and textures of nature can provide moments of calm, engagement, and meaning.

For caregivers, this experience offers an opportunity to slow down, connect, and share meaningful moments together. As we explore the gardens, trees, and seasonal landscapes, take your time. Pause when you wish. Notice the colors, animals, the movement of the leaves, and the beauty that surrounds us.

Below are some prompts for discussion: Remember, you can ask these prompts and then respond yourself or wait until your loved one is able to respond. You may choose to not use these prompts, and that is okay too.

Connection Prompts for Caregivers:

- “Winter days are spent...” e.g. curled up by the fire, snowshoeing, making homemade gifts
- “Remember when we would go to in winter” e.g. ice skating, skiing, and sledding.
- “We would always put up a Holiday tree in Winter... I loved the smell of real pine needles”
- “Every New Year we would...” e.g. write down our predictions for next year, eat a “good luck” meal, stay up to midnight.
- “Every winter you use to always...” e.g. build a fire, cut down the Christmas tree, bake cookies

- “Now that the cold weather is here, I am excited to...” e.g. build a snowman, drink hot chocolate, warm up by the fire.
- “I like to think about how the crackle of the fire sounds or the snow crunching underneath your boots.

Remember, you can view this episode together or allow your loved one to watch it on their own. If this is an activity you do with your loved one, the goal is not conversation, it is connection. Sitting quietly together, holding hands, observing nature and sharing the experience can be just as meaningful as words. By slowing down and paying attention to your loved one's reactions, you may discover that they are still communicating in ways that go beyond language.

Websites With More Information

For more relaxing videos Ithaca College has a website for your enjoyment

<https://www.ithaca.edu/mental-health-flock/stop-and-breathe/visual-relaxation-videos>

Nature's Notebook- Tracking seasonal plant and animal changes with the National Phenology Network

<https://www.usanpn.org/nn>

Cold Weather Safety for Older Adults, National Institute on Aging

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/safety/cold-weather-safety-older-adults>