



**BY CAROL ABAYA**

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**THE SANDWICH GENERATION**

**Question: "My mother, 88, is in a nursing home and wheelchair. She is mentally fuzzy at times. I want her to be at our house with the whole family on Christmas so she can see her great-grandchildren. My husband says 'No! Leave her at the nursing home (SNF).' I'm upset and mad at him. Please advise."**

**Answer:** Your husband is 100 percent correct for two key (among others) reasons:

1. Your mother will only be emotionally confused by so many people and so much noise. She will probably be very unhappy and "act out."
2. A caregiver (even if only in an oversight position--you) needs to let go of all her caregiving concerns, recharge herself and enjoy the festivities.

Being in a wheelchair presents logistics problems in your house, which is not wheelchair friendly. Also with her incontinence problems, your mother may have an 'accident' and be terribly embarrassed. Someone would have to be with her all the time, thus reducing that person's enjoyment.

Every SNF or ALF has a private room for family members to get together. Schedule a series of sessions with your mother with each family member and children. This reduces the noise and movement factors. Your mother's favorite foods can be served. Or the get together might just be for dessert. Besides food, pictures of events in the past year can be shared. She will get more needed attention this way.

Those with even mild dementia fare better in a controlled, calm and known environment. Your mother will feel safer in the nursing home than in your house, which would be crowded and noisy.

You need a 'time-out' from caregiving responsibilities and concerns. This is critical given the fact the party will be at your house. Enjoy yourself and know your mother will be happier in the nursing home.

**Question: "My father, 80, recently moved into an assisted living residence (ALF). He has one bedroom and a greatroom (living and dining room area). He insisted on taking his favorite recliner which is so worn there are holes in the arm rests. We want to get him a new chair for Christmas, but he says 'No way!' What should we do?"**

**Answer:** Listen to your father! Moving from a home of 25 years to a small apartment is traumatic for anyone. His chair provides emotional security.

You can make (or have made) arm rest covers to conceal the holes.

Or if the springs are also worn out, take him to a furniture stores and have him try out chairs. In order to get him to go with you, you might take him out to lunch and then say "Dad, I want to get (husband's name) a new chair for the TV room. Help me select one. I need a man's point of view." Hopefully your father will try out chairs and find one he really likes for himself.

**IDEAL GIFTS FOR ELDERS:**

1. Colorful flowers or a plant to bring in new life
  
2. A family photo album for reminiscing
  
3. A wall picture of the whole family for remembering
  
4. Something the elder uses all the time - such as a fragrant soap, hand lotion, dusting powder, perfume, cookies or candy. Be sure to get his or her (not your) favorite.
  
5. Check the condition of clothes and replace something worn out -- in the style and color she (not you) likes. But don't throw out something old without getting permission.

**The Sandwich Generation** is reader interactive and welcomes comments and questions.

Contact Abaya via her website

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*She does not respond to comments posted on this site.*

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