



Visitor Tips

One of the things that makes The Holiday Project unique is the importance we place on “people being with people”. In addition to anything else we might do, as visitors, we always take time to talk and listen to the people we visit, to spend time with them, and to ensure that they know we remember them and we want to include them in our celebration of the holiday. Below are a few suggestions.

DOS AND DON'T'S

- ❑ You can visit with people in a group or individually. You can visit people in the lobby, halls, day rooms, and in their rooms, according to the arrangement made with the facility. Before entering someone’s room, always knock and ask if that person would like a visitor.
- ❑ Approach people from the front. Give them a chance to see you.
- ❑ Refer to people in nursing homes as residents.
- ❑ Start by introducing yourself. Use your first name. Ask permission to address people by their first names. You can often find people’s names on their doors, on wristbands and on their possessions, or you can ask.
- ❑ If a resident is in a wheelchair, crouch down to his/her level. Make eye contact.
- ❑ Look for hearing aids. Speak slowly and distinctly, directly to people. Do not raise your voice unless you are sure the person cannot hear you.
- ❑ It is generally OK to touch people, especially by holding hands. Be aware of religious restrictions. If a person pulls away, respect that person’s body language and stop touching. Continue your conversation.
- ❑ If a resident does not verbally reply, he/she may still be able to hear you. Keep looking at the person and continue talking.
- ❑ Sometimes people will respond with incoherent conversation. That may be their way of communicating. With these people, be more concerned with just being with them than understanding what they are saying. Listen as if you do understand. You can even respond. These people often respond to touch.

- ❑ If a person wants to hug or kiss you, consider letting that person do it. If you want to hug or kiss someone you are visiting, ask first.
- ❑ If you are giving wrapped gifts and you see that someone is having trouble unwrapping the gift, offer to help.
- ❑ Singing is a wonderful way to share a holiday. It doesn’t matter if you are a good singer; join in and have fun!
- ❑ Always thank people for letting you visit them.
- ❑ If, at any time during the visit, you need to take a break, for any reason, do it. Visiting can be an emotional experience. Make sure you are taking care of yourself as well as the people you are visiting.

ABOUT CHILDREN

- ❑ Just about everyone loves children. Children often elicit a special reaction that an older person might not generate. If there are children visiting with you, let them know how special they are to the people they are visiting. Tell them that people may want to hug and kiss them and give them some ideas of things to say and questions to ask.

GREETINGS AND CONVERSATION STARTERS

- ❑ In your interactions with people you visit, reveal something about yourself and ask if people have a similar experience. Ask questions.
- ❑ Wish people a “Happy Holiday.” Ask about their experience of the holiday in previous years.
- ❑ Ask about people’s lives i.e. where they were born, what work they did, hobbies, pets, etc. People usually have good memories that they enjoy sharing. Sometimes, a memory will make a person sad. If that happens, spend a few minutes with the person and try to remind the person of happier times.
- ❑ Say something about your family’s traditions. Ask about their traditions.
- ❑ If you are in someone’s room, look for photographs. Ask about family. Comment on anything in the room i.e. decorations, artwork, etc.
- ❑ If the person is watching TV, ask about favorite shows or sports.
- ❑ Whereas it is fine to ask people how they are feeling, **do not** ask people why they are at the facility.