

# How to Safely Make a Senior's House Merry and Bright



Helping an elderly loved one decorate their house, apartment, nursing home room, etc., for the holidays can help both of you get into the holiday spirit. But, certain considerations should be taken into account to make sure their decorations don't become dangerous.

## **Tips to help you make your loved one's home merry and safe:**

### **1. Don't roast chestnuts on an open fire.**

The holidays can be full of fire. Candles are used in some way for pretty much every religious celebration from Christmas to Kwanzaa, and fireplaces are used for everything from burning Yule logs to roasting chestnuts. But, open flames can be dangerous, especially to a senior who may forget to blow out a candle or won't be able to react quickly to an out-of-control fire. Use electric candles in lieu of flaming ones. For fire-free ambiance, turn the television on and flip around till you find the Yule log station. (During the holidays, there are usually several stations that show continuous, commercial-free video loops of burning fireplaces.)

### **2. Oh, (fake) Christmas tree.**

A fake, fire-resistant Christmas tree is the best way to go when decorating a senior's home or apartment. As their name suggests, these evergreens are less likely to catch on fire, and do not require the consistent watering that their live counterparts do. Also, certain apartment communities, nursing homes and hospitals don't allow real trees. To give a fake tree a more authentic smell, you can buy

special pine-scented ornaments to place in strategic places on the tree.

### **3. Hang stockings (and ornaments) with care.**

Invest in safety hooks and shatter-proof ornaments to make trimming the tree and hanging decorations safer for all involved.

You might also consider using bits of festive ribbon to hang things.

### **4. Use caution when plugging in the Menorah.**

Assuming you took the first tip to heart, you will be dealing with a good deal of electrical lighting during the holidays. Inspect all electrical wires to ensure that they aren't damaged or frayed. Look for the UL label to determine whether lights have been approved for indoor use, outdoors use, or both. It may also be prudent to put all lighted decorations on a timer. This is particularly important when decorating the home of a senior with Alzheimer's disease as they are more likely to forget to turn off the lights.

Including your elderly loved one in the decorating process is certainly an option. Just be sure to give them tasks that aren't too difficult, or potentially hazardous.

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