

# Bonfire Night and Dementia

For many, Bonfire Night is a spectacle which we enjoy; fireworks light up the sky and bonfires burn, but for someone living with dementia this can be a challenging and overwhelming environment. There are a lot of sights and noises which can be unsettling for those living with dementia; coupled with large crowds it can sometimes cause distress.

Despite this, there are still various ways to get your loved one involved in Bonfire Night and still have a great time. In addition to organising fun activities, it is also important to take steps to ensure your loved one's safety and wellbeing on this night. With the right planning you can still enjoy a fun Bonfire Night with your loved one, whatever you choose to do to mark the occasion.



## Getting Involved on Bonfire Night

There are plenty of ways to involve your loved one on Bonfire Night, there may just need to be a few adjustments and considerations made. It is important to talk to your loved one about what they want; do they want to be involved? Do they want to watch the fireworks?

## Watching the Fireworks

Watching the fireworks can be stress-inducing for those living with dementia but if you're loved one likes to watch the fireworks, you can still achieve this. If you're loved one wants to attend a community bonfire, look to go to one with a smaller crowd perhaps and make sure someone is accompanying them at all times. Attending a bonfire may be too much for some, therefore there are other ways to watch the fireworks. If you live near a bonfire you can watch them from your garden, or you could set off your own. Being in control and close to home can be really beneficial; it also means your loved one can go indoors if they would prefer.

## Arts and Crafts

Watching the fireworks, or attending a bonfire, are not the only activities you can partake in on Bonfire Night. Why not get involved in some art and crafts. This is great for the whole family; set up an area for arts and crafts so that everyone can get involved as they please. Arts and crafts are great for those living with dementia as they get can a range of senses involved, and it can be incredibly relaxing.

## Cooking

There are plenty of traditional meals and treats associated with Bonfire Night and autumn in general. If you're loved one is a keen cook, or a food lover in general they may enjoy getting involved with some cooking or baking; or even just eating some Bonfire Night treats.

## Staying Safe and Calm

Whilst some people may enjoy getting involved with Bonfire Night activities, others may find the experience stressful. For those who are uneasy on Bonfire Night, there are a few ways to make them feel relaxed and safe; all it takes is a little planning ahead.

## Avoiding Fireworks

For those who don't enjoy the fireworks, find them scary or unsettling; staying indoors is the best option. If the noise is still a concern, look to sit in a room which is the most shielded from outdoor noise. Keeping busy with activities is a great way to distract your loved one from any feelings of anxiety they may have.

## Music

Listening to music is a good way to counteract the noises of fireworks and it can also act a as a good distraction. Listen to some relaxing music that your loved one enjoys, and perhaps encourage conversation to try and take their mind off the fireworks. Similarly, watching their favourite TV programmes can serve as a distraction.

## Dealing with Distress

Distraction is one of the best ways to deal with distress on Bonfire Night; as we mentioned music and TV can help with this; or even an audiobook. Crafty activities can also help distract your loved one but if the distress is too much, make sure to talk to them calmly and reassure them about what is happening.