



Meals and Eating

Mealtimes can present many challenges for the at-home caregiver. A loved one may experience poor appetite, lose all interest in food, forget to eat or how to use utensils properly. *Here are some ways to help:*

- ▶ Set up and maintain regular mealtimes
- ▶ Limit distractions such as television or radio while eating
- ▶ Keep table settings simple
- ▶ Avoid patterned dishes, tablecloths and placemats, which might be confused with food
- ▶ Make sure food temperature is neither too hot nor too cold
- ▶ Serve foods in sequence rather than together
- ▶ Allow for changing food preferences
- ▶ Allow plenty of time to eat and offer reminders about chewing and swallowing carefully
- ▶ Avoid foods that can cause choking and learn the Heimlich maneuver
- ▶ Make mealtimes a family activity
- ▶ Encourage independence by finding easier ways for your loved one to eat, for instance using a bowl and spoon, or even eating with his or her hands. Finger foods are easy to pick up and also fun to eat
- ▶ Offer frequent demonstrations of how to hold utensils and don't be concerned about neatness. Consider using plates with suction cups and no-spill glasses



Dressing and Grooming

Maintaining a good appearance is important to self-esteem. Yet, an individual with memory loss may be frustrated with the simple task of choosing clothes and getting dressed. *Here's how you can help facilitate these daily tasks:*

- ▶ Simplify choices
- ▶ Lay out clothing in logical sequence and provide directions, one item at a time
- ▶ Keep closets organized and free of excess clothing
- ▶ Choose clothes that are easy to put on and close. For example, clothes that button up the front are easier to manage than pullovers, and Velcro may be substituted when buttons and snaps become too difficult
- ▶ Provide comfortable, slip-on shoes with traction enhancing soles
- ▶ Buy duplicate outfits for individuals who want to wear the same clothing repeatedly
- ▶ Praise all attempts at independence and don't criticize mismatched clothes
- ▶ Avoid rushing

In terms of grooming, maintain regular grooming routines, such as trips to the barber or beauty parlor, for as long as possible. When grooming at home, encourage use of toiletries by providing favorite brands. Demonstrate grooming techniques if your loved one seems to have forgotten how, and replace all sharp and otherwise dangerous grooming tools with those featuring safety designs.

Care Outside the Home

Although it may be clear that your parent or loved one will eventually require a higher level of care than you can provide at home, you will likely feel a natural reluctance about transferring responsibility to the hands of strangers. While understandable, you must try to put these reservations aside. Today, residential facilities are available that are ideally suited to provide the specialized, compassionate care that seniors with memory loss and other forms of dementia need and deserve. Please contact us for additional information that will help you make a loving choice for your loved one.



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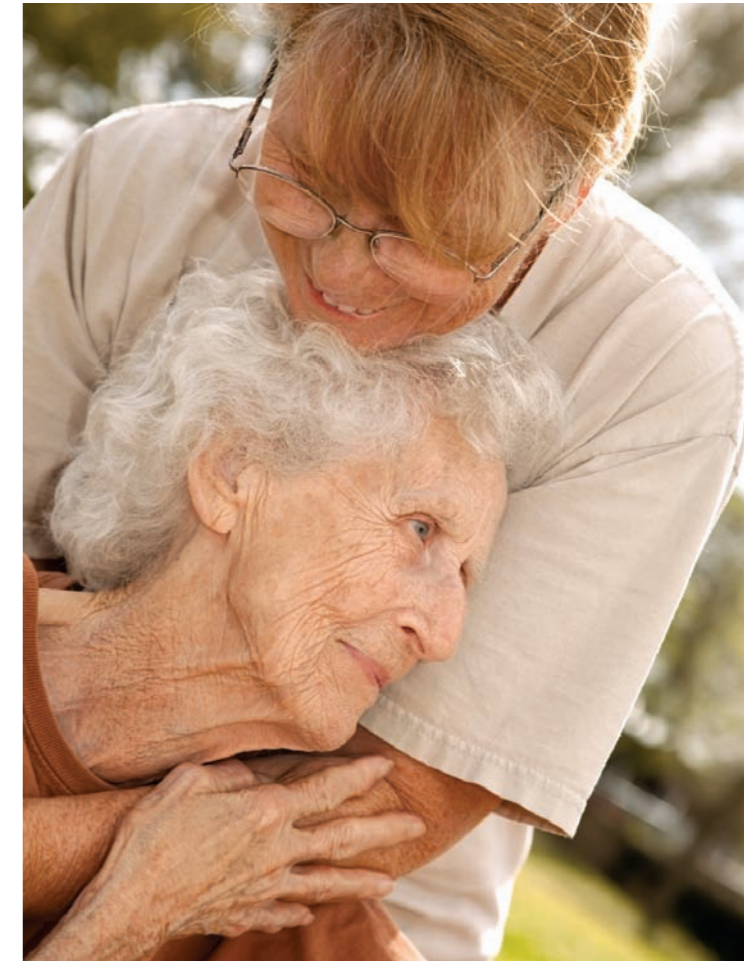
2202 North Kickapoo Street, Lincoln, IL 62656

2036.376

217-735-1538

Memory Loss Caregiving

Tips and techniques for enhancing the care and quality of life for someone with memory loss



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If you love someone with advancing memory loss, you know first hand the frustrations and the heartache the condition can cause. Memory loss robs people of their pasts and of the essential characteristics that have, over a lifetime, made them unique individuals, loving spouses and parents, good neighbors, tireless workers and enthusiastic participants in life.

Loved ones who have become caregivers of such individuals are faced with the task of trying to keep family bonds intact while coping with increasingly difficult symptoms, as well as unpredictable and often destructive behaviors. Handling these responsibilities is hard work. However, by increasing your understanding and bolstering caregiving skills, you can help your loved one continue to live as full a life as possible while taking steps to preserve your own well-being

Enhancing Quality of Life, One Day at a Time

As memory loss progresses, the affected person's ability to handle even simple tasks of daily living will diminish. As a caregiver, you can reduce the impact of these changes by approaching daily routines with understanding, flexibility and creative problem solving.



Communication

Memory loss will gradually diminish a person's ability to express their thoughts and emotions and to understand others. *These difficulties may manifest themselves in several ways:*

- ▶ Difficulty in finding the right words
- ▶ Using the same words repeatedly
- ▶ Inventing new words for familiar objects
- ▶ Losing one's train of thought
- ▶ Difficulty organizing thoughts logically
- ▶ Reverting to a native language
- ▶ Using profanity
- ▶ Avoiding conversation
- ▶ Relying on gestures rather than words

Here are some ways to encourage better communication:

- ▶ Let your loved one know what he or she is saying is important to you
- ▶ Maintain eye contact
- ▶ Give your love one time to collect his or her thoughts and don't interrupt
- ▶ Don't criticize, argue or correct
- ▶ If a word is used incorrectly, try guessing the right one
- ▶ Stay cheerful and encouraging; try to avoid getting frustrated or impatient
- ▶ Look for the feelings behind the words
- ▶ Always approach your loved one from the front and make sure he or she recognizes you
- ▶ Use his or her name frequently
- ▶ Speak slowly and clearly in short simple sentences
- ▶ Ask one question at a time and wait for a response
- ▶ Repeat information or questions as necessary
- ▶ When reminiscing, avoid saying things like "Do you remember when..?"
- ▶ Stick to simple responses without lengthy explanations

Even if your loved one has ceased speaking intelligibly, it doesn't mean he or she has lost the ability or desire to communicate. People with dementia still have things to say, we just have to relearn how to "listen"... to their facial expressions, their body language, and to their behaviors. Listen with your heart and you'll keep bonds intact.



Activities

For the person with memory loss, well-planned and meaningful daily activities are crucial to helping maintain his or her sense of self. Remaining engaged and involved can slow down cognitive deterioration, enhance self-esteem, and give life purpose and greater quality. Activities may be as simple as brushing one's teeth, or as creative as playing a guessing game. Coming up with effective activities may require some imagination and trial and error on your part, but the results will be well worth the effort. *Here are some guidelines to keep in mind:*

- ▶ Activities should be structured and focus on enjoyment rather than achievement
- ▶ Always offer your loved one the opportunity to help select activities
- ▶ Strive to make activities reflect your loved ones interests and abilities
- ▶ Choose activities that reflect past experiences and involve facets of daily life
- ▶ Vary activities to encourage mental, physical, and emotional participation



- ▶ Adjust activities to conform to decreasing abilities or attention span
- ▶ Look for things that seem to trigger memories, emotions or self-awareness
- ▶ Minimize distractions

Certain activities may work better at different times of the day, so you will need to experiment to determine when your loved one is most receptive. You should also be aware that when initiating activities, your approach could mean the difference between a mutually satisfying experience and a frustrating one. *Here are a few keys to success:*

- ▶ Offer support and supervision
- ▶ Focus on the process, not the result
- ▶ Be flexible and patient
- ▶ Be realistic and relaxed
- ▶ Help get the activity started
- ▶ Break down activities into simple, easy-to-follow steps
- ▶ Assist with difficult parts of the task
- ▶ Provide encouragement and praise
- ▶ Stress a sense of purpose
- ▶ Don't criticize or correct
- ▶ Encourage self-expression
- ▶ Don't initiate activities when you are feeling stressed or out of sorts
- ▶ Stay positive, and remember that a loving approach is always best

Once you've determined what activities work best and what times of day are most conducive to their success, create a daily routine and stick to it. Repetition and structure are important to creating a secure foundation for people with memory loss. Be sure to change activities once they cease to be effective and leave some room for spontaneity.

