10 Steps to Approach Memory Concerns

What to do when you notice changes in others

If you notice memory, thinking or behavior changes in someone close to you, it can be hard to know what to do or say. It's normal to be unsure or nervous about how to offer support, but these changes could be a sign of a serious health issue. Use this guide and space for notes below to help you prepare to take action.

ASSESS THE SITUATION

1. What changes in memory, thinking or behavior do you see?

What's the person doing — or not doing — that's out of the ordinary and causing concern?

2. What else might be going on?

Various conditions can cause changes in memory, thinking and behavior. What are some health or lifestyle issues that could be a factor? Examples include family stress or health issues like urinary tract infections, diabetes or depression.

3. Learn about the signs of Alzheimer's and other dementias and the benefits of an early diagnosis.

Visit **alz.org/10signs** to educate yourself on common warning signs of Alzheimer's and other dementias, and why it's important to know what is causing the changes. Do you notice any of the signs in the person? What are they?

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4. Has anyone else noticed the change(s)?
Find out if friends and family have seen changes. What are they?

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_____

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HAVE A CONVERSATION

5. Who should have the conversation to discuss concerns?
It could be you, a trusted family member or friend, or a combination. It's usually best to speak one-on-one so the person doesn't feel threatened by a group, but use your best judgment about what will make the person most comfortable.

» Name(s):

_____

_____

6. What is the best time and place to have the conversation?
Have the conversation as soon as possible. In addition to choosing a date and time, consider where the person will feel most comfortable.

» Date:

_____

» Time:

_____

» Location:

_____

7. What will you or the person having the conversation say?
Try the following:

» I've noticed [change] in you, and I'm concerned. Have you noticed it? Are you worried?

» How have you been feeling lately? You haven't seemed like yourself.

» I noticed you [specific example] and it worried me. Has anything else like that happened?

Write additional conversation starters below.

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8. Offer to go with the person to the doctor.

Ask the person if they will see a doctor and show your support by offering to go to the appointment. Some words of encouragement may include:

» There are lots of things that could be causing this, and dementia may or may not be one of them. Let's see if the doctor can help us figure out what's going on.

» The sooner we know what's causing these problems, the sooner we can address it.

» I think it would give us both peace of mind if we talked with a doctor.

Write your own ideas below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. If needed, have multiple conversations.

The first conversation may not be successful. Write down some notes about how it went to help plan for the next conversation.

» Location of conversation:

_____

» Date/time of day:

_____

» What worked well?

_____

» What didn't?

_____

» What was the result?

_____

» What can be done differently next time?

_____

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REACH OUT FOR HELP

10. Turn to the Alzheimer's Association® for information and support.

- Visit **alz.org/education** to take our free *Dementia Conversations* education program online. Learn how to have honest and caring conversations about common concerns — including driving, doctor visits, and legal and financial planning — when someone begins to show signs of dementia.
- Call our free **24/7 Helpline** (**800.272.3900**) to speak with a master's-level clinician who can provide more information about how to discuss memory concerns with someone close to you.
- Visit the **Alzheimer's Association & AARP Community Resource Finder** (**alz.org/CRF**) to find local resources, such as health care professionals, and your closest Association chapter.
- Explore **Evaluating Memory and Thinking Problems: What to Expect** (**alz.org/evaluatememory**) to learn what a typical medical evaluation may include.

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