

Memory & Cognition

Parent: _____ Last updated: _____

This is an observation guide useful when an older parent seems more forgetful or confused. Focus on repeated changes from the usual habits, especially when they begin affecting everyday life, not isolated mistakes.

1. What has changed?

☐	Repeating the same question or story within a short time
☐	Forgetting recent conversations, plans or appointments more often
☐	Becoming confused about the day, time or place
☐	Having more difficulty with familiar tasks such as cooking, shopping or using the phone
☐	Struggling more than before with bills, money or simple planning
☐	Getting lost or confused on familiar routes
☐	Having noticeably more difficulty finding words or following a conversation
☐	Misplacing things in unusual places and being unable to retrace steps
☐	Showing changes in judgement or decisions that seem unlike them
☐	Needing help with things they previously managed independently

2. Look at the context - what was happening around the change?

Note: When did it start? Was there a recent illness, medication change, fall, poor sleep, major stress, or reduced eating or drinking? Does it happen more when the person is tired or overwhelmed?

3. Specific examples

Date	What happened?	What was happening around it?	Who noticed?

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Think about how to create ease and comfort. How to approach conversations and how to help.

1. Make everyday life easier

- ☐ Keep frequently used objects always in the same place.
- ☐ Use clear organizers, lists, calendars that the person easily sees and understands how to use.
- ☐ Place short reminders where they are actually needed.
- ☐ Put step 1 – step 2 notes where a succession of 2 or 3 actions is needed. (ex. start coffee machine)
- ☐ Keep routines reasonably predictable throughout the day.
- ☐ Keep the same familiar people involved as much as possible.
- ☐ Reduce unnecessary choices and distractions when the person is struggling.
- ☐ Simplify the activities, simplify the surroundings.
- ☐ Allow more time for familiar tasks, and notice if the way they manage them changes.

2. Communicate in a way that helps

- ☐ Use one idea or one question at a time.
- ☐ Do not just repeat, explain in a different way if unclear.
- ☐ Allow extra time for an answer, with patience.
- ☐ Offer simple choices: “Tea or coffee?” rather than: “What would you like?”
- ☐ Show the options, when possible, if words are not enough.
- ☐ Avoid repeatedly testing memory with “Don't you remember?” / “What did we talk about?”
- ☐ Correct only when it really matters; harmless mistakes do not always need correcting.

3. Discuss observations with family members

- ☐ Have other family members or carers noticed the same change?
- ☐ Is it happening more often? How often? Compared to what?
- ☐ Is it beginning to affect safety or independence?

When to discuss with a doctor: If memory or thinking changes persist, become more frequent, or begin affecting everyday activities, it is worth discussing them with the person's doctor.



Bring the specific examples and notes to the appointment; they can be useful. If you have them, also bring: Current Medication List, Health Overview, and Medical Log and Documents.



Important: sudden confusion is different. If a person becomes noticeably confused over a few hours or a day, especially when this is new for them, seek prompt medical advice.