

Welcome to Tips Number 8. We will be looking at ways to use memory prompts to support a person with dementia to be as independent as possible. Memory loss is a common symptom of Dementia. You may have had a recent diagnosis of dementia and want to try and maintain as much independence as possible, or you may be supporting a person with dementia and want to help them be as independent as they can. Either way, encouraging independence using memory prompts can have positive benefits for a person's sense of self, role within our family/home, wellbeing, and ability to function.

As always, it is important to remember that every person is unique. We all remember things in different ways. Some suggestions may not work for everyone and what works this week may not work next week. However, we hope you will find the confidence to try different and new ideas.

Consider which memory strategies and memory devices are likely to fit best with the person you are supporting. Practise the memory strategies and see what works for them/you.

Memory is linked to a person's overall health and well-being.

PERSON

Routines and Habits: Memory strategies work best when they become a habit. EG: at breakfast time check your diary/calendar for that day. Last thing before going to bed: routinely check external doors are locked and stove/heaters turned off. Routinely turn stove wall switch off.

Simplify tasks: Break the task down and do one thing at a time.

Difficulty recalling people names: repeat the name of the person and include their name in your conversation. You may wish to mention to the person you are a bit forgetful at times, and ask them to repeat their name. When you get home, record their name in your diary.

Say words out loud to yourself. EG: 'I have turned the oven off'

Keep things simple.

It's ok to ask someone to remind you re an important event.

Set up payment for regular bills by direct debit/auto payment.

Consider purchasing duplicate items of items which may be frequently misplaced. EG: tooth brushes, cheap reading glasses.

Carry with you a small notebook/pen.

Home

Reduce clutter inside the home and in garages/sheds.

Set up a central place in the home, where important items such as phones, charges, wallets etc are routinely kept.

When replacing household items consider purchasing devices which have auto shut off features. EG electric jugs, irons, electric blankets, heaters.

Visual Cues

Diary.

Calendars. Get in the habit of crossing off each day before bed. Family can be asked to assist with setting up/routinely adding to diary/calendar.

Whiteboard (magnetic is useful for keeping items of importance where they will be seen. Position these items in an area of house where it is easy to routinely see them.

Electronic Calendar Clocks. Easy to read and show Day/Date/Time.

Journal: record a few sentences/words, or stick photos in.

Daily newspaper. Discard old newspapers once read.

Shopping List: cross items off when at shop. If reading is difficult, rip off labels from packets of food as they need replacing at home.

Have a list of easy to read phone list beside the landline phone or in a central part of your home. Record emergency services, GP surgery, family, close neighbours/friends.

Consider purchasing hand held phone devices with speed dial option and phones which can have numbers pre-programmed onto them.

'Post it' Notes: Write reminders on. Once task has been completed throw the note away. EG: Put a Post it note where your library books are stored-reminder to return by certain date.

Laminated sign on inside of main external door to the home: Take keys, wallet, phone, etc.

Laminated sign in bathroom/toilet: reminding to hand wash. Use visual reminders if reading is an issue.

Set of keys: colour code key(s) frequently used.

Medication reminder systems: Dosette box, Blister Packs, Robo rolls. Discuss options with Pharmacist.

Leave medications in a visible place, taking care where you store them, if living with young children, or if young children visit. Maybe store the medications where the tea/coffee items are located on the kitchen bench.

If an item needs to be replaced: eg light bulb. Leave old bulb on bench as a prompt.

Place photos/familiar objects around the house: help the person you are caring for to stay connected with the present.

Use timer on stove: food cooking times, and to help prompt at other times. EG: when to leave home for an appointment.

Alarm clocks-set to remind you re appointments/events during the day.

Night sensor lights to help remind people where toilet is.

Leave toilet door open during the day/night.

Dressing: Lay the clothes for the day out in sequence of how the person is to put them on.

Open shelves: in kitchen/lounge/bedroom: use to store frequently used items.

For people with more advanced dementia:

Consider clear labels on walking aids (words/picture) EG: on walking stick: 'hold in right hand'.

Meaningful cues around home: eg: picture of shower on bathroom door. Picture/words on kitchen cupboards and bedroom drawers, where commonly used items stored.

Provide routine verbal reminders to use the toilet and to hand wash throughout the day.

Visitor's journal/diary. Place in easy to find place for visitors to record their visits.

Self-care activities: Try pointing to object to be used, demonstration, verbal guidance. EG: hair brushing. Pass the brush to the person you are supporting, and gently guide them to brush their hair.

Technology

Technology can help to maintain routines, reduce anxiety and improve quality of life.

Mobile phones have many features set up to assist memory: show date, time, alarms, diary features, reminders. Some mobile phones have 'Virtual Post It' feature. Dictaphone: record messages to self. Take photos to assist with recall. Notes to self.

Apps: medication reminders,

Locator and GPS devices: help to find frequently mislaid items such as keys/wallets. Blue Tooth Tracer devices.

Smart phones: Home monitoring devices.

Digital photo frames.

Digital watch. EG: set up a beep to remind to check diary each day.

Virtual assistants like 'Alexa' to remind re events like doctor's appointments, favourite television programmes.

Finally, Be Kind to Yourself

- You are human. None of us are perfect-especially during these times at home.
- Take care of yourself, as well as your family member who has dementia.
- The Dementia Waikato Support Coordinators are Occupational Therapists with expertise in promoting independence and use of memory prompts. We are available to assist you with any concerns you may have re home safety and how you may be able to encourage the person with a dementia diagnosis to be as independent as possible.

Feel free to contact us at Dementia Waikato if you need to talk about any issues you are having with the person you are caring for. Dementia Waikato staff are all working from home and can speak with you on the phone 07 929 4042 or via email info@dementiawaikato.org.nz