



Mood and Memory Loss

Coping with memory loss

Coping with memory loss, and adapting to changes in the ability to think, remember, and learn can be a time of sadness and frustration for both the person affected and their family/friends.

While you may clearly remember things that happened long ago, recent facts, and events can be quickly forgotten. You may have trouble keeping track of time and places; remembering appointments, people, names and finding the right words. Memory loss can also decrease one's confidence in social interactions.

Memory Tips: Develop strategies that make the best use of your memory as it is

- Keep a notebook with you. Write it down if you want to remember it!
- Record people's names, telephone numbers and addresses, including your own in your notebook.
- Label cupboards and drawers with words or pictures that describe their contents, such as dishes and silverware or sweaters and socks.
- Put your keys in the same place.
- Carefully put things away in their place. Don't let clutter build up.
- Keep a set of photos of people you see regularly; label the photos with names and what each does.
- Try to organize routines where possible. Get into the habit of doing something before or after some daily event such as a meal.
- Change the way you approach tasks. Don't try to do too many things at once. Try to concentrate on one task at a time. Don't let your mind wander. Minimize distractions. If you are interrupted try to return to the task as soon as possible.
- To help yourself focus, repeat things out loud. Say the name of the person you've just met or say aloud where you are putting something.
- To help retain the material you want to remember, work out, first, what you need to remember for your purposes. Then, decide how much has to be in your head and what can usefully be stored in an external memory, such as a diary. Writing information down, in the right place, is better than having to scour your memory.
- Develop strategies that help you memorize a particular thing, such as the familiar rhymes used to remember the days in the month ("30 days hath September"). You can make up your own, by linking the thing you want to remember to a mental picture. For example, if you want to remember the name Nightingale, you could look at the person and think of the bird, or you could put together an image of a knight being blown about in a gale.

Why rely on only one system, your memory? Always have a backup!



Coping with feelings

Living with the changes caused by memory loss can cause one to experience a range of emotions including sadness, fear, anger and frustration. At times, it may feel like you are on an emotional roller coaster ride. Everyone is unique and will respond differently. You may be frightened and worried about the future; or overwhelmed in trying to make sense of what the changes mean for you and your loved ones. You may even cope by trying to hide or deny the changes. Other feelings of social isolation and loneliness may emerge if you withdraw from social activities.

Some people may notice a change in their mood as they experience memory loss. Depression is a common experience for people with memory loss. The progression of memory changes may also contribute to increased feelings of loss of control, fear and social isolation.

- Memory loss can make you feel as if you are **losing control**. Telling those around you how you feel may give you comfort and increase your support.
- Feeling **angry** is OK. Anger is often a response to feeling frustrated, frightened or humiliated. Sometimes talking to family/friends, being part of a support group or talking to a counselor who knows about memory loss can help.
- You may feel **sadness** when faced with the changes that memory loss brings to your life. It may help to spend time with friends or family or to do something you enjoy.

Managing Your Moods

- Importantly **seek help** from your physician regarding your mood
If you (or your loved one) are suicidal, seek urgent professional help. Call 911
- Some people find comfort in creative expression through writing, photography, music, arts and crafts. Consider writing your memoir or story. Use a journal to record your thoughts and feelings.
- Look after yourself. Rest when you are tired.
- Eat properly. A diet rich in dark vegetables and fruits may help protect brain cells. Eat less fat and more antioxidant rich foods.
- Exercise is the elixir of life. Increase your endorphins, nature's antidepressant. Walking is easy and even 10 minutes a day can give you a boost.
- Stop drinking or limit your alcohol intake as recommended by your treating physician
- Stop smoking/chewing tobacco
- Take medications as prescribed
- Stay connected to your community, neighbors, spiritual/religious advisor, family and friends.
- Ask your physician what kinds of activities you can do to keep active

Sources:

Alzheimer's Association www.alz.org

Mind –for better mental health - http://www.mind.org.uk/help/diagnoses_and_conditions/memory_loss