

# Caring Conversations

## How to Communicate with Those Who Have Memory Loss

You can't control memory loss, only your reaction to it. Reminding people who have memory loss that their memory is impaired is rarely kind. When communicating with persons with memory loss, remember, their reactions are normal based on *what they believe is happening*. Memory loss requires family caregivers to adopt a new way of talking.

Be kind...don't remind.

### Reasoning

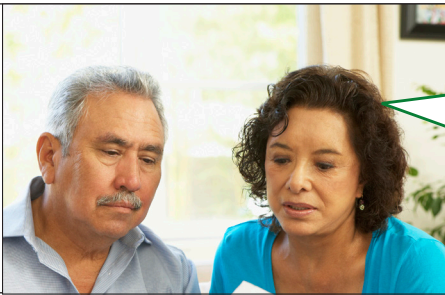
#### DON'T: Argue

Why didn't you tell me I had a dentist appointment today?



(Argue) I did! I reminded you this morning!

#### DO: Be patient, and go with the flow and distract



(Respond to feelings) I understand you are upset about missing your appointment.  
(Reassure) I'll make sure to reschedule.  
(Distract) Let's read the newspaper together.

### Reminding

#### DON'T: Remind them that they forget

I wonder how my mom is doing. I haven't spoken to her in a while and I miss her.



(Remind) Your mom passed away 10 years ago! You were at her funeral. Don't you remember?

#### DO: Reassure and distract



(Reassure) You really miss your mom don't you?  
(Distract) Maybe we can give her a call after our afternoon walk.

### 100% Forgiveness

#### DON'T: Take it personally

Who are you? Where's my husband?



(take it personally) What do you mean-where's your husband?  
I am your husband!

#### DO: Distract them to a different subject

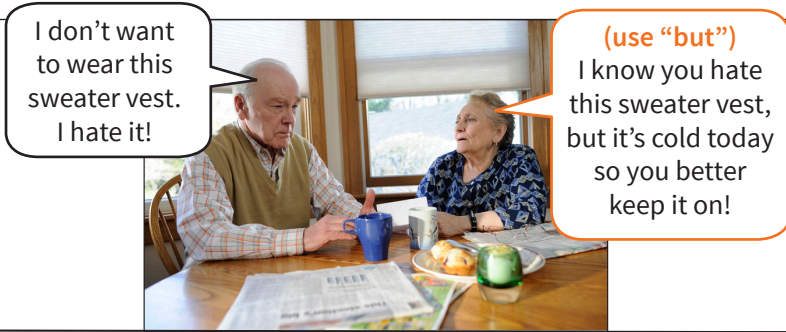


(go with the flow, reassure) He'll be here for dinner.  
(distract) How about some tea and cookies? Would you like chocolate chip or oatmeal?

## Phrasing your message

### **DON'T:** Use the word “but”

### **DO:** Use “however” and “nevertheless”



## The “Don'ts” and “Do's” of caring conversation:

### **FORGIVING**



- Don't take things personally
- Don't question their memory
- Don't blame them



- Forgive any negative reactions
- Accept the blame (even when it isn't your fault)
- Impart 100% forgiveness instead of engaging in confrontation

### **REMINDING**



- Don't remind them that they forget
- Don't test their memory
- Don't contradict or correct



- Provide brief explanations
- Repeat instructions or sentences in exactly the same way (don't re-word)
- Reminisce

### **BEING PATIENT**



- Don't rush them
- Don't argue
- Don't correct



- Avoid insistence, try again later
- To avoid confrontations, you may choose to leave the room
- Give them time to comprehend what you are asking/saying
- Be patient, cheerful and reassuring

### **REASONING**



- Don't reason
- Don't try to convince them
- Don't insist



- Simply agree with them
- Divert attention by introducing a different subject
- Divert attention with a new activity

### **REDUCING ANXIETY**



- Don't ask open-ended questions (e.g. What do you want for lunch?)
- Avoid distress



- Acknowledge their feelings
- Present them with easy, straightforward options to choose from (e.g. Do you want ham or turkey for your sandwich?)
- Constantly reassure them

## **Alzheimer's** | **ORANGE COUNTY**

Next Steps: If you need suggestions on how to handle challenging situations, call Alzheimer's Orange County at 844-HELP-ALZ (844-435-7259), or visit our website at [www.alzoc.org](http://www.alzoc.org) for more information or to register for our *Caring Conversations: A New Way of Talking* class.