

# Caring Conversations

## How to Communicate with Those Who Have Memory Loss

**MEMORY  
SUPPORT  
SERVICES**

A Program of  
Alzheimer's Orange County

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

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



### Reminding

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

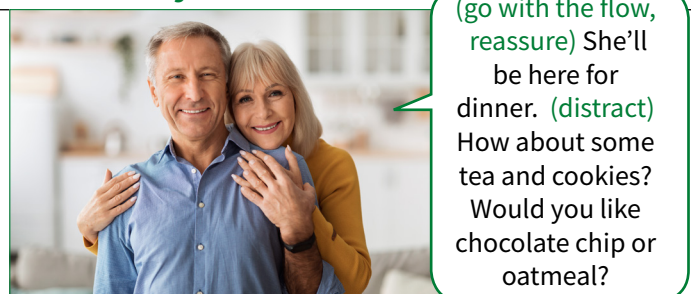
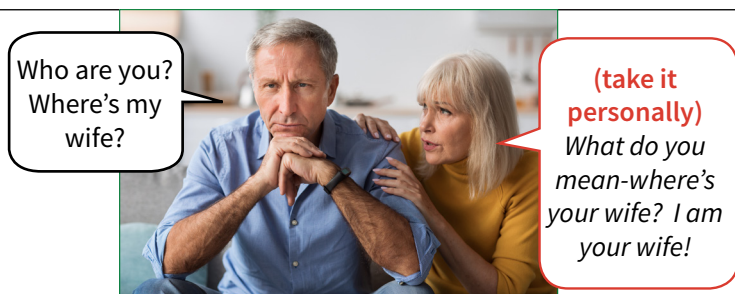
#### **DO**: Reassure and distract



### 100% Forgiveness

#### **DON'T**: Take it personally

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



# 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