



5 Simple Ways to Provide Loving Support to Parents with Memory Challenges

It can be hard to see someone you love struggle with mental decline as they age. Sadly, memory loss and other cognitive impairments are all too common. There are no easy solutions, but you can take several simple steps to treat aging parents with respect and compassion.

1. Speak slowly and clearly.

Cognitive decline, potentially coupled with hearing loss, makes it harder to process information quickly. Make it easier for Mom or Dad to follow your words by slowing down, speaking clearly, and pausing between sentences. If you're talking face-to-face instead of over the phone, sit close, so you don't have to speak loudly.

2. Only correct them when it's essential.

If a parent's memory is fragile, there will be numerous instances when facts are confused, and details are forgotten, perhaps seconds later. Avoid correcting them unless it's

genuinely helpful to do so, enhancing their ability to enjoy the conversation.

3. Repeat things as often as necessary.

It doesn't matter that you've told the same story several times before. And, it's irrelevant if you need to share important family news more than once. Instead of showing any signs of frustration over repeating yourself, be thankful that you'll never run out of things to talk about!

4. Stay open to hearing their stories.

Likewise, aging parents may forget that they shared something moments ago and repeat themselves. Typically, stories from their younger days are

recalled more vividly and accurately than the events of the past 24 hours. Old stories may be familiar reruns too. But with patience, you might learn something new about your family's history—a veritable gold nugget.

5. Remember gratitude.

Caring for aging parents can be mentally exhausting, even if you aren't their primary caregiver. If you're feeling down, try recalling the many ways your parents helped you and feel thankful for their gifts of time, energy, and devotion. Focusing on gratitude can lighten your spirit and make it easier to return the love.

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