

# 10 Symptoms & Strategies

## A GUIDE FOR PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA



# Introduction

The Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia is pleased to share with you a video of three remarkable women with early stage dementia. In this video series Anne, Faye and Sandra speak candidly about the symptoms they experience and the strategies they use to live well with dementia.

Accompanying the video is a guide available for family and friends, people with dementia and health care professionals. These guides are designed to encourage reflection and stimulate conversation, with the overall intention of providing education, sharing strategies, and reducing stigma. We hope these first voice videos will enhance supportive interactions in our communities.



*Faye*



*Anne*



*Sandra*

If you have any questions about the content of this document, the 10 symptoms and strategies, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias or the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia please contact:

Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia  
1-800-611-6345  
alzheimer@asns.ca  
www.alzheimer.ca/ns



# Reflection Questions for Persons with Dementia

1

## Memory Loss that Affects Day to Day Abilities

Forgetting things often or struggling to retain new information.



*Anne has difficulty remembering the many instructions following her doctor's appointments. She takes a notebook with her when she visits her family doctor. The doctor writes specific instructions for Anne to follow between appointments. This helps Anne remember.*

**What have you found most helpful in assisting you to remember appointments or special occasions?**

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2

## Difficulty Performing Familiar Tasks

Forgetting how to do something you've been doing your whole life, such as preparing a meal or getting dressed.

*Sandra said preparing meals became more difficult because of the many distractions. Sandra was able to continue preparing her meals with the help of a Home Support Worker who came in twice a week to help her prepare meals and freeze them for the week.*

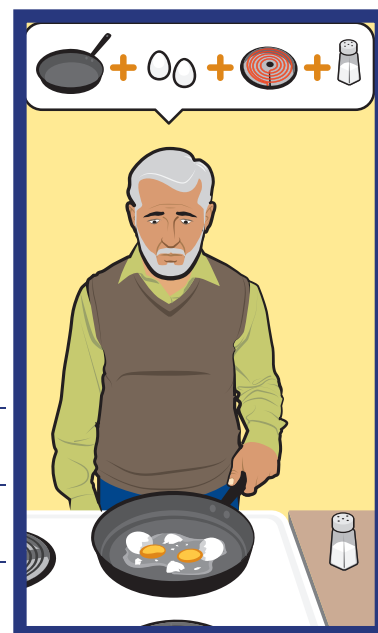
**What is one strategy you added to your routine that makes day to day activities easier?**

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# Reflection Questions for Persons with Dementia

## Problems with Language

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Forgetting words or substituting words that don't fit the context.



*Sandra said it is difficult to follow a conversation if her friend goes off topic and sometimes has difficulty with word order. It is hard switching from one topic to another and at times Sandra feels lost. She uses humour to relax and communicate effectively.*

**Do you ask for help with communication? What kind of support is helpful to you when you are communicating with friends?**

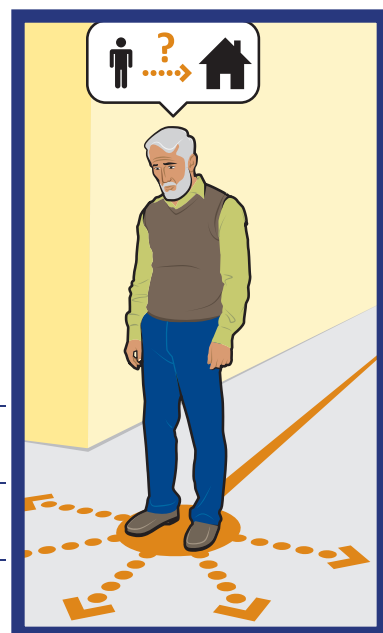
## Disorientation with Time and Space

4

Not knowing what day of the week it is or getting lost in a familiar place.

*Sandra mentioned she loves to walk and was getting lost in her own neighbourhood. She now uses either the GPS on her phone, or she calls her daughter who then uses the "Locate Me" app on her phone to help direct Sandra to where she needs to go.*

**What do you do to help keep track of time? What has been helpful to maintain your independence in getting around your community?**



# Reflection Questions for Persons with Dementia

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## Impaired Judgment

Not recognizing a medical problem that needs attention or wearing light clothing on a cold day.



*Faye shared her example of impaired judgment while shopping. If she saw a sale item, she automatically purchased the item, even if she already had four toasters at home! Her daughter suggested waiting 24 hours to think about it, before purchasing. This pause helps Faye make better judgments when making purchases.*

**Are you finding it difficult to pay your bills regularly or have family members been commenting on your spending habits? What support would you like to have to maintain financial independence and support appropriate decision making?**

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## Problems with Abstract Thinking

Having difficulty balancing a cheque book, for example not understanding what numbers are and how they are used.

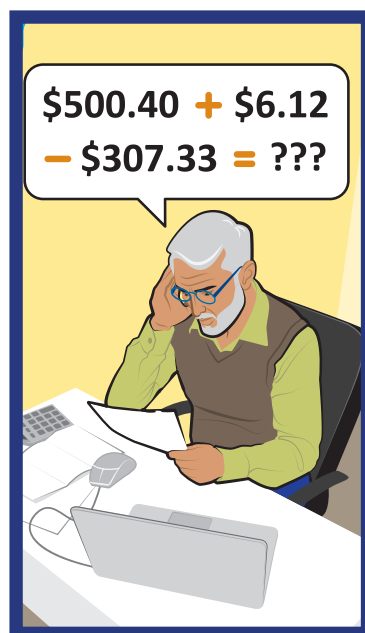
*Anne explained how receiving a phone call from a friend to do something unplanned or spur of the moment often threw her off of her routine. It seemed too complicated. If however her friend was specific about the activity, ("Would you like to go to Tim's?"), Anne would be better prepared to say yes; the choice was simple and the place familiar.*

**Do you avoid doing activities with friends because they may not have provided you with enough details about the event?  
What kinds of questions do you ask to get clarification and make sense of complicated requests?**

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# Reflection Questions for Persons with Dementia

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## Misplacing Things

Putting things in strange places, like a dress in the refrigerator or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.



*To avoid losing things Anne has a bookcase in her front hall where she places everything including her purse, planner and notebook. She follows the same routine by always keeping important things here. This helps her to keep things organized.*

**What do you do to ensure you do not misplace your keys, wallet or other important items?**

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## Changes in Mood and Behaviour

Exhibiting severe mood swings from being easy-going to quick tempered.

*Anxiety is Faye's new little emoji that follows her around everywhere she goes. She had never been an anxious person and now she second guesses herself. She suggests taking a moment to step away from challenging situations and find calm in music, art, nature or your own spiritual place.*

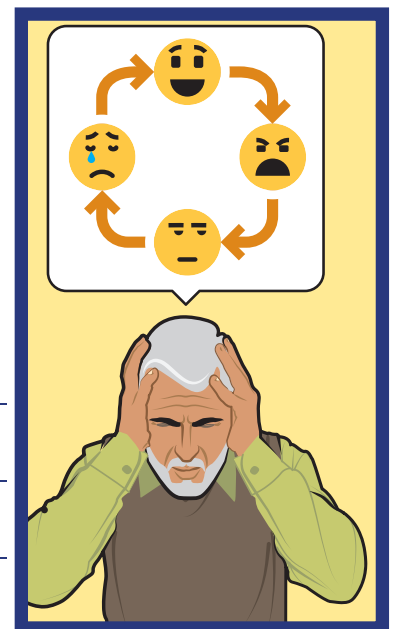
**Do you experience changes in your mood? How do you manage changes in your mood and what helps you to become more comfortable?**

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# Reflection Questions for Persons with Dementia



## Changes in Personality

Behaving out of character such as becoming confused, suspicious or fearful.



*Faye describes the change in her personality as a shock of electricity that hits her and she loses patience. This can happen sometimes when she experiences confusion if she is in a crowded room. She goes for a walk or into a new surrounding to have a break from the conversation to find her “Faye space”.*

**Have you noticed anything about yourself that feels out of character? Is there anything in the environment that may contribute to this change in character? What do you do when this happens?**

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## Loss of Initiative

Losing interest in friends, family and favourite activities.

*Faye said her get up and go, got up and left. She was comfortable staying at home and doing nothing. She made a choice to make a concerted effort to stay engaged and move ahead with life. She would reward herself with special foods when she pushed through and demonstrated initiative.*

**Do you ever feel a loss of initiative? How do you stay motivated to be engaged and active with your family, friends and community?**

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## Where can I find these videos?

You can view all 10 videos on our website!

Visit [www.alzheimer.ca/ns/livingwell](http://www.alzheimer.ca/ns/livingwell) to see the full playlist.