

CARE Compass

Helping Navigate the Later Stages of Dementia



Memory Books

 Sanders-Brown
Center on Aging

This project was made possible by a generous gift.

The goal of the program is to help provide tools and information so that you can navigate the later stages of dementia. We hope that you find these videos and resources to be helpful and encouraging.

This program is designed to be a guide only for the compassionate care and support of your loved one and is not medical advice. If you have questions or concerns, always check with your doctor.

We also want to acknowledge that late-stage dementia can look very different from person to person. Sometimes the ideas we share may not work or work for a short time. That is okay. No one person is alike, and what works today may not work tomorrow. We hope to provide tools that can be options for you to try.

This guide contains links and other resources that may not be provided by the presenter but are added to the guide to provide additional information and support.

Memory Books

Memory Books are a way to connect with your loved one and reminisce about families, vacations, or occupations.

To start:

Select photos of friends, family, life milestones (weddings, vacations) they can be about anything there is no wrong or right way to make a memory book.

You can choose to have your book focus on one specific interest or wider scope of someone's life.

Collect the photos or other items you would like to use

Tips for creating a memory book:

- Try to stick to one or two pictures per page – helps focus the conversation to one topic
- Label people in group photos - Make sure each person is labeled in a photo. If your person is having trouble recognizing someone, you could put a current photo next to an older one.
- Minimize background decorations - be mindful of the type of paper you use, or the background images as images or designs can become distracting.
- Be mindful of font size - Make sure words are large enough for your loved one to easily read

- Caption Length - try to keep captions short and keep in mind where your loved one is at. If they can handle a full sentence like "I was a teacher" or, if they need less, like "Teacher."
- First Person Pronouns - remember to use first person pronouns to decrease confusion
- Involve your loved one when you can - you may start off by making one page and bringing it to them to see how they react. Taking note of how well they can see the captions and if they are distracted by anything on the page. You can slowly build a book page by page if needed.

Ways to use your Memory book:

- Ask if you could join them "Would you mind if I sat with you? I would enjoy talking to you."
- If you notice that your loved one is struggling, you might say something like "Don't worry, Dad. I think you were telling me about when you caught that big fish."
- Guide the conversation topics and redirect when needed. You may need to start the conversation off "I recently got married tell me about your wedding."
- Thank them for sharing their story with you
- Try not to quiz your loved one or correct them instead of saying "No, that is not Jennifer it is Sarah." Try saying "Jennifer looks a lot like Sarah, doesn't she?"
- There will be times your loved one may not be interested in the book; that is okay to put it down and try again at another time.

Memory books can come in all different shapes and sizes:

- A 3-ring binder and clear plastic sleeves
- A scrap book
- A photo album
- A small photo holder like what is found in a wallet (label each picture)
- A pocket folder
- A folder with brads
- A collection of sheets of paper

Memory Book Information Form

Complete the following sentences that are most appropriate for your family member, and for which you have a picture to use in the memory book.

1. My name is _____ (full name or nickname)
2. I was born on _____ (date) in _____ (city, state)
3. My parents were _____ (names)
4. I spent most of my career working for _____
5. My wife's/husband's name is _____
6. Our wedding was on _____ (date) in _____ (city, state)
7. My children's names are
a) _____ b) _____ c) _____ d) _____ e) _____
8. What are the current occupations of these children (or their spouse's name)?
a) _____ b) _____ c) _____ d) _____ e) _____
9. My grandchildren's names are
a) _____ b) _____ c) _____ d) _____ e) _____
10. My _____ (type of pet)'s name is _____
11. I went to college/high school at _____ in _____ (city, state)
12. I earned a living _____ (my occupation)
13. Now that I am retired, I enjoy _____
14. I used to play _____ (sport/instrument)
15. My favorite pastime is/was _____ (hobby)

16. When I was younger, I used to _____ (anything)

17. I attend (went to) _____ (church/temple)

18. One of my most memorable vacations was _____ (where), on
_____ (when), with _____ (whom)

19. Anything else that is particularly important or memorable:

From Caregiver's Guide to Creating Memory and Communication Supports for People with Dementia, by Alyssa A. Lanzi and Michelle