



Independent Age

The older person you're matched with may find it difficult to find the right word/s during a conversation, or say a word that sounds like the word they're thinking of. They may also forget your name.

If you notice that they are forgetting words and becoming stressed during your phone call, why not suggest calling back another time? Or if it's a few words they're struggling with, just give them some time. If you're unsure of the word they are trying to say, consider the context of what they are saying. If they are struggling to remember names, including your own, don't put them on the spot. Instead, drop your name into the conversation e.g. "My partner said to me NAME, let's go for a walk". Or if it's someone else, try adding their name into the conversation too such as "How is your grandson, Jacob?".

Your older person may forget recent events, information you've already told them, appointments, or even when your scheduled call is. It's not that they weren't listening to you, they've just to store the information.

Although it may be challenging experiencing this over the phone, it's not their fault and it will most probably be even more difficult for them. Keeping calm and patient is key in these situations. Don't be afraid of repeating information and asking them to write it down or encouraging them to keep a diary or a calendar. If they aren't understanding something and ask questions which need you to repeat what you've already told them, try turning the answer into short bitesize answers and repeat them when needed.

You may have just noticed that your conversations aren't flowing as well as they used to or that your older person has become quiet over the past few calls.

Keeping a consistent routine is key when supporting someone experiencing memory loss. Try and ensure your calls are on time and when you have both agreed the call would be. If your calls are regular but you're still experiencing difficulties, why not suggest a time change? Changing your calls to the morning or during the afternoon may mean that they have more energy and can focus on the call. It is also important that all background noise and distractions are kept to a minimum, for both of you. Don't be afraid of asking your older person to turn down the TV or radio, explaining that you want to give all of your attention to them, and that the background noise is making that difficult.

Some other quick tips and things to remember:

1. Sometimes your older person may tell you things you know not be true, but don't correct or question the validity of what they say. Focus on what matters to both of you: that you are enjoying chatting together. If it's something you'd consider to be a welfare or safeguarding concern, speak to your Independent Age contact.
2. Communicate your enjoyment through the tone of your voice. Try writing down a few key events in your week that you're happy to share in order to have something to talk about, and don't worry if sometimes it feels like you're doing a lot of the talking.
3. Don't be afraid of periods of silence; it's a key part in effective communication and can often allow your older person to collect their thoughts before talking.
4. Bring your whole self to the phone call. If you've had a bad day or just don't feel up to the call, let your older person know in advance of the call and reschedule or let us know.
5. Remember, the Digital & Phone Services team are here to support you. If you are worried about the welfare and safety of the older person you're speaking with, or have anything else you'd like to talk to us about, you can get in touch with your Independent Age contact directly, or contact the team on telephone.services@independentage.org or 0207 605 4265.

Our mission: To ensure that as we grow older, we all have the opportunity to live well with dignity, choice and purpose.

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