

Ways to Support Change When Language or Memory Is a Challenge

by Kathy Hickman, Jeanette Romkema and Elaine Wiersma

When language or memory is a challenge for learners we need to find other ways to support a learner's learning and plan for transfer. Here are a few ideas to consider.

1. **Take a photo of the learner with his commitment.** This visual cue can serve as a reminder and help the person to self-manage, despite challenges they may experience.

For example: *Post the photo of the learner with the reminder on the front door, to tell someone they are leaving.*



2. **Agree on a schedule for checking in.** Having a care partner, learning partner, friend or family member to support a learner's learning and action plans can be extremely helpful. Together they should decide how often to meet, what will be helpful to do in that time, and how they will remind themselves of this plan.

For example: *Every morning at 9am we will review the day, and you will tell me what support you think you may need for that day.*

3. **Select a metaphor.** A simple metaphor can encapsulate complex thinking or plans if it is carefully chosen. Let learners take time to select one that works, draw it or use an object to remind themselves, and place it somewhere they will often see it.



For example: *A boiling kettle of water = When I keep all my feelings in I will steam up and boil over. I need to communicate my feelings as they arise.*

4. **Ask someone to write a letter for the learner.** The learner may wish to share his/her plan(s) with family members or friends, or wish to share tips for supporting them. To do this a letter, email or text may be helpful. Offer support to write this if the learner would like.

For example: *I have decided that I want to go for a walk every day. Please give me a call each morning to remind me. If I'm having a bad day, maybe you could come with me or encourage me to ask my friend Bill.*

5. **Create a magnet or sign for fridge or wall.** Ask learners to select words that will carry the most meaning for them and offer a variety of materials for creating this trigger.

For example: Provide colourful paper, markers, pre-cut letters or stencils. Including pictures (drawn, cut from magazines or print out graphics) can also be helpful.



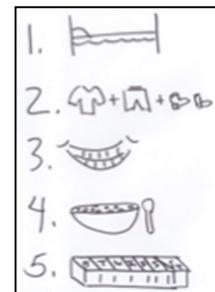
6. **Create an audio recording.** If the technology (e.g. handheld tape or digital recorders, Smartphone) is available and the learner is comfortable using it, make an audio recording of their plans. Label and file recordings in a meaningful way for easy access later. It may be useful for the learner to let a family member or friend know about the recordings so they can remind the person where to find it.

7. **Implement a reminder system.** Support the learner to implement a reminder system that works for them. Some may prefer to use a notebook or pocket calendar while others prefer electronic devices such as a smartphone. Have the learner decide *what* s/he wants to be reminded of, *which words* will be most significant and *when* s/he wants to be reminded.



8. **Encourage the person to use his or her camera** to record memory triggers and print out the picture(s), or use the camera to photograph the steps of doing some action.

9. **Ask the person to draw the steps they want to take.** There are many ways to record ideas and plans besides writing them down. Using numbers, pictures, colours, symbols and size to communicate can be just as effective. Offer support if the person would like help to represent their ideas.



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