

COGNITIVA Dementia Conversation Script

A practical guide for talking with a loved one about memory concerns, brain health, and getting help.

One of the hardest parts of dementia care is starting the conversation. Many people feel embarrassed, defensive, scared, or simply do not see the changes the same way that family members do. The goal is not to win an argument. The goal is to open the door to support, safety, and medical evaluation.

1. Before You Start the Conversation

- Pick a calm, private, low-stress time - not during an argument or after a mistake has just happened.
- If possible, have one main family member lead the discussion so it does not feel like everyone is ganging up.
- Focus on concern, support, and teamwork rather than blame.
- Use a few specific examples, but do not get pulled into debating every detail.
- Keep the goal simple: getting more information, not proving that something is wrong.

2. What You Can Say

Gentle opening lines

"I have noticed a few changes in your memory, and I care about your health. I think it would be a good idea for us to talk to a doctor together."

"Sometimes memory changes can be caused by things we can treat. I would feel better if we checked things out."

"I am not trying to criticize you. I am bringing this up because I love you and want to support you."

"Would you be open to having a brain health check-up, just to get more information?"

If they are worried or scared

"I know this may feel scary. We do not have to assume the worst. The first step is simply getting more information."

"Whatever is going on, we will handle it together. You are not alone in this."

"Getting checked does not mean you have dementia. It means we are being thoughtful and proactive."

3. What Not to Say

- Avoid labels right away such as, You have dementia, or, You are losing your mind.
- Avoid arguing about each forgotten event, missed bill, or repeated story.
- Avoid shaming statements such as, You always do this, or, You cannot be trusted anymore.
- Avoid talking to the person like a child.
- Avoid trying to force the conversation when emotions are escalating.

Instead, try to say...

- I may not have the perfect words, but I am coming from a place of concern.
- Let us take this one step at a time.
- We do not have to solve everything today.

4. If Your Loved One Resists or Says, I am Fine

Possible responses

"I understand that you feel okay. I still think it would be wise to check in with the doctor, just to be safe."

"Even if this turns out to be nothing serious, I would feel better having it looked at."

"We can call it a memory check, a wellness visit, or a brain health visit - whatever feels most comfortable to you."

"Would you be willing to do this for my peace of mind?"

If they get angry

"I can see this is upsetting, and I am sorry this feels hard. I am bringing it up because I care about you."

"We do not need to finish this conversation right now. Let us pause and come back to it later."

"I am not against you. I am on your side."



5. Helpful Ways to Frame the Appointment

- Let us rule out things like sleep problems, vitamin issues, medication side effects, depression, or other treatable causes.
- A good evaluation can help us understand what is happening and what support might help.
- This is similar to checking blood pressure or heart health - we are checking brain health.

6. When to Involve a Doctor Sooner

- Getting lost in familiar places.
- Trouble managing medications, bills, or appointments.
- New falls, wandering, poor judgment, or unsafe cooking.
- New paranoia, major personality change, or rapidly worsening confusion.
- Driving concerns, scams, or safety issues at home.
- A sudden change in confusion or behavior that feels different from baseline.

Important: A sudden or dramatic change in confusion, behavior, alertness, or function may suggest a medical problem such as infection, dehydration, medication effects, or delirium and should not simply be assumed to be dementia.

