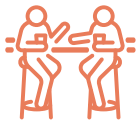




Memory Café Guide



This document is a QuickStart guide for organizations looking to start new memory café programs. It is produced by the Oklahoma State Department of Health’s Oklahoma Healthy Brain Initiative, along with guidance from our community partners. This guide will provide information on:



Environment & Atmosphere



Volunteers & Staffing



Location



Activities



What to Bring



Helpful Links & Resources

What is a Memory Café?

- A memory café is a social gathering for individuals living with dementia and their care partners. Guests are welcome whose dementia is due to any underlying condition, and at any stage of disease progression. Care partners can include spouses, children, friends and professional caregivers.
- Cafés meet in accessible community locations. They strive for an atmosphere that’s more like a coffee house or a neighborhood party than a clinical program.
- Typically, guests are not asked their diagnosis. This way, people who have not been diagnosed or are not comfortable with their diagnosis feel welcome.
- While information about resources and services is available for those who seek it, cafés provide a break from focusing on disease and disability.

Environment & Atmosphere

- There should be a registration table with volunteers welcoming people at the door and providing name tags.
- Familiarity and routine are keys to long-term success. Try to do things the same way every month. The host should go around and talk to the people at every table to build relationships.
- Foster an environment of equality and respect. Everyone should be able to forget about dementia for an hour.
- Being consistent is important — time, day of month, location and format.
- Don't ask anyone why they are there; everyone is welcome.
- Activity paired with speakers/time-of-year theme.
- Follow exact schedule every month. Routine is very important.
- Volunteers are interspersed with guests.
- Maintain a resource table by the entrance, but don't bring it up/point it out. Simply place it prominently near the entrance, and people will take what they need.
- Maintain a dementia friendly physical environment.

Volunteers & Staffing

- Volunteers are a key to success and should be carefully selected.
- Some memory cafés have one or two paid staff members — that requires grants or other funding.
- Typically, six or more volunteers are at a program.
- When everyone arrives — about an hour before the program begins — divide up duties and get everything set up for the event.
- When short-staffed for volunteers, consider reaching out to high school students who may need community service hours.
- Administrative buy-in from host site is very helpful. See if they would be willing to provide staff/funds for administrative support, AV support and refreshments.
- Volunteers should have the gift of hospitality and an understanding of dementia.
- Volunteers should go through dementia friendly training. They should be hand-picked, compassionate, friendly and calm. The Compassionate Communication guide should be shared with them.
- Train volunteers not to mention health issues or dementia.

Location

- Churches and libraries are great community spaces to partner with if you don't have a space of your own.
- Must-haves:
 - Fully accessible building, including accessible restrooms.
 - Sufficient parking.
 - Accessible via public transit if many guests, staff or volunteers will use this means of travel.
 - Generally convenient location for guests, staff and volunteers.
- Bonuses:
 - Free, or nominal fee to use the space.
 - Available indefinitely.
 - Family restroom.
 - Kitchen access for easier food preparation/clean-up.
 - Appealing/inviting location with a community feel.
- Memory cafés are **NOT** for advertising. They should not be held in LTC communities, and hosts should be wary of senior service providers who want to host/sponsor the events.

Activities

- Most memory cafés tend to be activity-focused, often taking into consideration seasons or holidays and events happening during the month.
- Some memory cafés endeavor to have a guest speaker each month. This is more work for the host, but can be very rewarding for guests.
- A typical run-of-show for a memory café might look like:
 - Welcome at the door, sign-in.
 - Refreshments.
 - Have an activity (printed word search/crossword puzzle) at the beginning for early arrivals while everything is getting set up. Remember older adults tend to show up early.
 - Welcome: This day in history, upcoming events.
 - A group activity (singing, word games, chair exercises, musical instrument sessions, slide shows about travel destinations or topics) **OR** guest speaker talks for 20-40 minutes.
 - Other activities in smaller groups (smaller jigsaw puzzles, memory boxes, checkers, painting activities, games).
 - Wrap-up: Reminder for next month, end with everyone singing a song together.
 - Always end with the same song, lyrics printed out on each table (e.g., Happy Trails).

What to Bring

- Provide a table for dementia and caregiver resources near the entrance. It doesn't need to be mentioned, and volunteers should not try to steer specific people towards it. Simply make sure it is visible and prominent. If they have questions or want additional resources, they will ask you.
- It is recommended to provide light refreshments. Check into the possibility of the host organizations providing refreshments. If not, consider asking volunteers if they would be willing to bring some. Refreshments commonly include coffee, lemonade, tea, pastries and charcuterie boards.
- A smile! Remember that people with dementia will often notice and respond to nonverbal communication more than spoken words. Do your best to maintain a friendly and welcoming demeanor.

Other Suggestions & Advice

- Memory cafés are not meant to be caregiver respite. They are meant to be respite from the disease for both the person with the disease and the caregiver where they can engage in an enjoyable activity together and no one talks about memory issues. If you would like to provide a caregiver support group concurrently with a respite activity for people with dementia, we encourage you to do this separately from the memory café.
- Groups from LTC facilities should only be allowed if they have a companion for every resident attending.
- Some memory cafés meet once a month, some meet every week. Some meet on weekdays, others meet on weekends. Pick a schedule that will work for your volunteers and community.
- These programs are slow to start, with only a few people for the first few months. Attendance grows as news spreads through word of mouth.
- Check-in list, but no forms. Keep things informal.
- Email list for regulars; get contact info from new people so they can stay in the loop. You may want to cap attendance to maintain a calm environment and make sure things don't get too loud and overwhelming.

Helpful Links & Resources

- Request access to the Boston Jewish Family and Children’s Service Memory Café toolkit: <https://www.jfcsboston.org/our-services/services-for-older-adults/home-community-supports/alzheimers-related-dementias-family-support/memorycafetoolkit>
- Memory Café Norms and Standards: <https://d3s4bwez5h2fgv.cloudfront.net/documents/1-Memory-Cafe-Percolator-norms-standards.pdf>
- Tip Sheet: Promoting Your Memory Café: <https://d3s4bwez5h2fgv.cloudfront.net/documents/Percolator-Tip-Sheet-Promoting-Your-Memory-Cafe.pdf>
- Tip Sheet: Funding Your Memory Café: <https://d3s4bwez5h2fgv.cloudfront.net/documents/Percolator-Tip-Sheet-Funding-Your-Memory-Cafe.pdf>
- Word Search/Crossword Puzzle Generator: <https://www.puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/>
- Bingo Card Generator: <https://bingobaker.com/>

