



Memory Cafes

What is a memory cafe?

A memory cafe is a gathering of individuals with memory loss, along with their caregivers, friends, and/or family in a safe, supportive, and engaging environment. It is a social gathering that provides an opportunity to make new friends and interact without fear of embarrassment or being misunderstood. Some participants also find it to be an avenue for sharing concerns and providing support. Most cafes meet once or twice a month for an hour or two to allow members to get to know one another and share a positive experience.

Memory cafes share a similar mission, but many develop their own personality based on the interests of the current participants. Some are primarily social gatherings for conversation, while others include structured activities, such as arts, music, crafts, or creative writing. Others may include an educational component, including speakers who provide resources.

Who should attend?

Anyone who is concerned about their memory is welcome to attend. Memory cafes can be great groups for those with mild cognitive impairment or a diagnosis of dementia or memory impairment. Friends and family members of these individuals are encouraged to attend, as well.

For many, the diagnosis of dementia can be alienating. Families don't know how to react, and friends can pull away. It can become harder to make standing social dates as skills decline and doctor's visits increase.

Memory cafes provide an opportunity for normalcy. People can come together over a simple cup of coffee and enjoy each other's company. They can have fun and laugh. Activities provide an outlet for couples to enjoy each other's company and meet new friends in the process. Additional benefits come down the road as these new friends can be turned to for support and resources. Memory cafes allow people to remain socially engaged with others who are traveling the same journey.

Where do cafes take place?

Memory cafes are offered in a variety of settings and locations. Some operate in churches, and others take place in local senior or community centers. Sometimes the cafes are held in museums or cultural centers, and occasionally they even meet in an actual cafe. The meeting location is typically a space large enough to be comfortable for all the participants.