

UW Medicine

The Memory Loss Journey

A brief introduction

From Alice, living with dementia:

“After hearing the news, I just felt totally lost. But you know what, I have a good life. That sounds crazy, but I do!

“I get out, and I have fun, and I don’t worry about Alzheimer’s. Because if you can’t fix it, then you have to find a way to live with it.

“I’ve got a group of people who love me, and who stand by me, and that is what life is supposed to be.

“I just want all the happiness I can have, and that’s what I go for.”



Photo by Rachel Turner, Alzheimer’s Association



From Vivian, a care partner:

“When my husband was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, I didn’t have much information. The disease wasn’t in our family, so I was starting from scratch.

“Knowing that there’s a community out there to draw on was very important.”



*A family meeting at the
Memory and Brain Wellness
Center*

A Few Key Points

As you begin this journey, we offer a few key points about living with memory loss:

- **You are not defined by your disease.** You have people who love you, things you like to do, and gifts to offer.
- **Living with memory loss is not easy, but there are ways to cope with it.** Healthy habits can help you feel better and think more clearly. You have time to adapt. You can find ways to keep enjoying life.
- **You do not have to walk this path alone.** Your family, friends, and the MBWC team are with you as you move forward. People and programs are available in the community to help support you.

A Letter from The Gathering Place

We would like to share a letter written to you by members of The Gathering Place. The Gathering Place is an early-stage memory loss enrichment program at Greenwood Senior Center in Seattle, Washington.

This group spent many months thinking about what they most want to tell others who are newly diagnosed with memory loss or dementia. Here is their heartfelt message:



Members of The Gathering Place

Dear friend,

We are a community of people living successfully with memory loss. We understand that you also have received a diagnosis of memory loss. We want to recognize your courage in finding out what is going on. It is normal to feel disbelief, anger, fear, and denial, but know that you are not alone.

Our hearts go out to you.

You may want to hide your diagnosis. Many of us did, too. But we have found that sharing what we are living with lightens the load. It also allows us to lessen the stigma around memory loss. We urge you not to hide. Connect with others who are living with memory loss, and encourage your family to get support. Acceptance is important. We are all in this together.

We have learned to live with our memory loss and still have productive lives with family and friends. We would like to give you hope that you too can live a full life. There will be obstacles to come, but you have an opportunity to give back to your community and yourself, and to experience beauty, happiness, and kindness.

Sincerely,

Walt, Mark, Bob, Sarah, Roger, Ron, Helene, Rick, and Midge

