

## How to Spot Potential Memory Loss During Holiday Gatherings

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The holidays are an opportunity to reconnect with loved ones you haven't seen in a while. However, you may notice changes that have occurred in your loved one during the time you spent apart, including changes in memory. While these changes are not always easily recognizable, here are some examples of memory changes that might indicate more than normal aging:

- **Repeating questions** pertaining to the upcoming holiday plans: This could include calling family several times in anticipation of events and asking the same questions, having forgotten the previous conversations. Despite having these conversations, confusion about time and place may persist.
- **Preparing for the upcoming events at abnormal times**, like in the middle of the night.

- **A lack of holiday cheer and/or decorations** in the home. This may occur because familiar tasks have become difficult or vision changes have made operating a ladder to set up décor more dangerous.
- **More spilling** while sharing food items between guests; this could also be due to changes in vision.
- **Decreased attention to appearance:** The family member may not appear as “well kempt” as usual. Their choice of clothing may also appear atypical; an example of this could be someone who is wearing sweatpants to a religious service, rather than their usual attire.
- **Challenges in problem solving**, such as the inability to follow a recipe while cooking or difficulty participating in a familiar game.
- **Decreased judgment** might result in building a snowman with the grandkids without a coat/proper clothing or being scammed into sharing their Social Security number for a “holiday charity.”
- **Finding misplaced items in odd locations**, such as keys in a wrapped present or stocking.
- **Unusual language and/or penmanship** on cards and gifts due to difficulty with communication. Similarly, not sending out their traditional holiday card.
- **Overlooked or missed traditions** that your loved one used to organize could be due to an inability to initiate them.
- **Expressing desire for a smaller holiday gathering** because the chaos of the holiday gathering is now uncomfortable, rather than enjoyable.

These are just a few examples of signs you might encounter during the holiday season when reconnecting with your loved ones. If you recognize any of these changes in yourself or your loved one, please call the Mercy Center for Memory Health at (319) 398-6435 or visit [www.mercycare.org/memorycare](http://www.mercycare.org/memorycare) to learn more or schedule an evaluation.

