

MEMORY LOSS AND APATHY

Living with memory loss can affect someone's motivation and overall mood.

Apathy and depression are both common in people living with memory loss.

Although similar, there are distinct differences between the two.

APATHY

Includes lack of motivation and interest in daily tasks, including things that were once enjoyable. A lack of interest in talking with others or socializing is another sign of apathy.

DEPRESSION

Includes being sad, tearful, hopeless and feelings of low self-worth. Other signs of depression can include changes in appetite, low energy levels and sleep problems.

What can be done to help someone with apathy or depression?

When interacting with someone who is living with memory loss and is showing signs of apathy and depression, it is best to:

- Maintain a regular daily schedule as much as possible.
- Include meaningful daytime activities in the routine, such as chores around the house or a visit with a friend. Adjust expectations to meet someone's ability level.
- Help the person get started on a task, as lack of motivation makes task engagement difficult. Try asking, "Can you help me with this?" or "I'd love for us to do this together!"
- Coordinate activities that keep the person's mood in mind throughout the course of their day. If the person is more active and willing to participate in the morning, have a more engaging task in the morning and more relaxing activities for later in the day.
- Use positive incentives to assist with motivation. For example, try offering a trip to a favorite restaurant after a doctor's appointment.
- Talk with the person's doctor about symptoms of depression and apathy. Non-pharmacological interventions, such as those listed above, are most recommended for older adults living with dementia. Medications can be helpful in some situations but should first be discussed with a physician.

**If you need more information or have questions,
please contact our Clinical Social Worker, Danielle Hellios, MSW, LCSW at 847.882.6604.**