



Where Do We Begin?

A practical first-steps guide for families when something doesn't seem right.

01 NOTICE THE PATTERN *One moment doesn't tell the story. Patterns over time do.*

Write specific examples—not just “Mom is forgetful.” Notice frequency, duration, progression, and impact on everyday life.

Date	What did you notice?	How often / how long?	Impact on daily life

Main concern: _____ Began: _____ Getting worse? ☐ Yes ☐ No

BEFORE YOU CONTINUE: Is the change sudden or rapidly worsening? Seek urgent medical help for sudden confusion, new weakness, facial drooping, speech difficulty, a serious fall or head injury, or immediate danger. For gradual changes, continue tracking and note any safety concerns involving driving, wandering, cooking, medicines, or finances.

02 WHEN THEY SAY “I’M FINE” *Protect the relationship.*

Instead of debating whether they have memory problems, acknowledge their feelings and invite a routine health check:

“I hear you. I’m not trying to take over. I’ve noticed a couple of things that worry me, and I’d feel better if we checked in with the doctor together.”

03 WHO TO TALK TO *Start with primary care.*

A family medicine or internal medicine clinician is often a good first step. A geriatrician may also be an option. Ask for a visit specifically to discuss changes in memory, thinking, or daily functioning.

Finding a doctor: Call the number on the insurance card, check Medicare Care Compare, or ask trusted community contacts for recommendations.

When you call: “I’d like to schedule an appointment to discuss changes in memory and everyday functioning. Is a longer visit available?”

04 PREPARE FOR THE APPOINTMENT *Bring the details.*

- ☐ This tracker and 2–3 clear examples
- ☐ A complete list of medicines, vitamins, and supplements
- ☐ Health history, past doctors, and important recent changes
- ☐ Insurance information, glasses, hearing aids, and a trusted support person if welcomed

What Do We Do Next?

Use these questions during the visit. You do not have to know every step—only the next right one.

05 ASK BETTER QUESTIONS *Diagnosis is a process, not a single test.*

- ☐ What might be causing these changes—and what other conditions should we check for?
- ☐ Would a cognitive screening, medication review, mood, hearing, or vision assessment help?
- ☐ Which blood tests are appropriate (for example, blood count, metabolic tests, thyroid, or B12)?
- ☐ Would brain imaging or a specialist referral be useful in this situation?
- ☐ When should we come back to review results? What should prompt an earlier call?

A urine test is generally guided by symptoms and clinical findings—not confusion alone. The clinician determines which tests are appropriate.

06 RECORDS, PERMISSION & FOLLOW-UP *Make the next visit easier.*

You can share observations with a doctor even if you are not authorized to receive your loved one's records. To obtain records, ask about a signed release or another valid legal basis. Discuss healthcare power of attorney early, while your loved one can understand and make informed decisions. Requirements depend on the situation and state law.

Before leaving, write down: next appointment _____ tests/referrals _____
who will follow up _____ by when _____

07 MY NEXT RIGHT STEP THIS WEEK *Choose one.*

- ☐ Check urgency / start tracking
- ☐ Make an appointment
- ☐ Gather records / medicines
- ☐ Have a calm conversation

I will: _____ By when: _____

NEED MORE GUIDANCE?

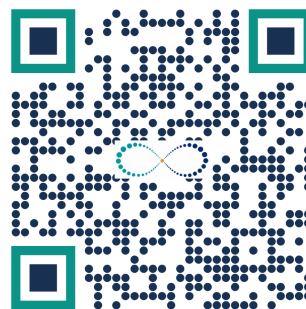
Scan the QR code or visit MindfulConnectionUs.com for practical dementia education, caregiver tools, and guidance for your family.

MARC Aging & Adult Services: 816-421-4980

Alzheimer's Association: 800-272-3900

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