

Cognitive Changes: Repetition

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Not all repetition is due to cognitive changes. Other factors to consider:

- Hearing loss
- Unmet needs (hunger, thirst, discomfort)
- Medication side effects
- Stress, overstimulation, or environmental changes
- Loneliness or need for engagement

Understanding Perseveration

While repetition is typically driven by memory loss, perseveration is when the person becomes mentally “stuck” and continues a behavior, thought, or response without being able to shift to something new—even after receiving an answer or moving on in the conversation. These behaviors are often involuntary.

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A person with cognitive decline may **repeat themselves frequently** - whether it's asking the same question, telling the same story, or performing the same action. Repetition often occurs because the individual has difficulty recalling what they've already said or done. There are strategies that can help prevent or reduce this behavior.

1

Stay calm and patient.

Avoid showing frustration or responses that will increase agitation or distress, such as “You already said that.” Focus on support, not correction.

2

Answer simply and consistently.

Provide short, clear responses. Repeating your answer calmly is often necessary.

3

Use reassurance.

Sometimes the question or repetition reflects anxiety. Reassure your loved one by saying “You’re safe.” or “Everything is taken care of.”

4

Write things down or use visual cues.

Write down answers to common repeated questions, like appointments or routines.

5

Get support.

Repetition can be one of the most emotionally challenging symptoms to navigate. Consider joining a support group or attending educational classes for practical strategies and emotional support.

6

Know when to take action.

If repetition is increasing in frequency, is impacting safety, or paired with confusion, consider speaking with a healthcare provider. Early evaluation can help identify causes and guide care planning.