

# **What to do if you think that a loved one has dementia**

**Are you worried about changes of behaviour in a friend or loved one? Founder of Group Homes Australia aged care facilities, Tamar Krebs, has some key advice to help you spot the warning signs of dementia.**

We all forget our keys in different places. We sometimes cannot find our phones and perhaps even forgot the name of an old acquaintance. We all have mood swings and lose interest in different things at various stages of our life.

However, when does forgetfulness start to become actual memory loss? When do the mood swings need to be investigated further? When should you begin to worry and go get checked out?

These are common questions people have when noticing the gradual but slight changes in their loved one.

For some, the changes appear gradually. For example, they may have been a talented cook, and perhaps you begin to notice their cooking changes. Maybe they put in too many spices, or burn the food. Eventually, they gradually lose interest in cooking completely. The difficulty of completing familiar tasks becomes increasingly challenging.

Other small signs include forgetting the time of day and familiar places. Another one - and this is a tricky one - is forgetting words more frequently.

If you start to notice these signs, here's what you should do.

## **1. Where to start...**

It is crucial that you reach out for help. A good starting point is to visit a GP. Depending on their experience of working with people with dementia, they may refer you to a psychologist, geriatrician or neurologist for further cognitive testing. It is important to accompany your loved one to these assessments, if possible.

## **2. Grief Counselling**

First and foremost, dealing with the diagnosis and changes from an emotional standpoint is very important - and many will need help with this. Grief counselling is an important avenue to explore the emotional change and journey for the person living with dementia, as well as the family.

## **3. Rehabilitation Options**

Exploring the opportunities of rehabilitation, whether speech pathology, occupational therapy and even physiotherapy can assist the person to adapt to the new way of living and develop various strategies to help them along the way.

## 4. Legal Documents

Ensure that legal documents, such as power of attorney and enduring guardian, are signed so that they are easily accessible if needed in the future. It never hurts to think ahead and be practical.

## 5. Communicate

Talk to your loved one about how they feel about their diagnosis and what they are going through. Share your fears, concerns and hopes for the future together.

*Tamar Krebs is the CEO and Founder of [Group Homes Australia](#).*

*3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016*

Source: [http://www.lifestyle.com.au/health/what-to-do-if-you-think-a-loved-one-might-have-dementia.aspx?ref=BP\\_LINKLIST\\_features-list\\_2\\_spot-the-warning-signs-of-dementia\\_020816](http://www.lifestyle.com.au/health/what-to-do-if-you-think-a-loved-one-might-have-dementia.aspx?ref=BP_LINKLIST_features-list_2_spot-the-warning-signs-of-dementia_020816)