

# Scenario: Losing your things

People with dementia may have increasing difficulties with searching for their belongings and where they have put them due to their memory problems. They may misplace everyday items, leave items in unusual places or find it difficult to recall where they have put an item for safekeeping. This may lead to feelings of distress, and frustration but also suspicion (e.g. someone is tricking you).



## Aims

The aims of this scenario are to simulate the experience of memory changes that can occur in the context of dementia and to simulate feelings of frustration and/or suspicion experienced by people with dementia during their search for misplaced objects.



## Learning Objectives

- Understanding that memory problems are part of some people's journey with dementia.
- Increase awareness of the difficulties and impact on daily functioning that people with dementia may experience in terms of misplacing and searching for belongings
- Increase people's insight into the overload of stimuli people with dementia may experience during the search.



## When to use this scenario

This scenario focuses on a situation in which a person needs to search for certain objects. This is an individual-based scenario, but can also be done with a group (each person participating after one another). It is suitable for in-person settings and may be used in an introductory course as well as more advanced courses. This scenario may simulate a situation at home or in a nursing home. However, this scenario may be more prevalent in mild to moderate stages of dementia .

## Equipment

### General equipment:

- Room (creating a real-life living experience, for example, a living room)
- Objects in the room (e.g. chair, table, fruit bowl)
- Everyday items that the participant will put in the room (and search for later on). Examples include keys, remote control, etc.
- Phones (2x) OR headphones OR speaker

### Self-experiment equipment:

- Reduced sensitivity gloves
- Simulation glasses
- Headphones (optional if using audio sample)



During the scenario the sound of a phone will go off:

- The facilitator may use an actual phone (which is called using their own phone) and will be hidden somewhere in the room.

**OR**

- The facilitator may play a sound file and provide the participant with headphones which will need to be worn during the scenario.
- A Bluetooth connection would be ideal, as the sound may be activated/played from a distance.

**OR**

- The facilitator hides a small speaker somewhere in the room and uses this speaker to play the sound of a phone ringing.

## Downloadable supporting materials



- Slide deck
- Evaluation form
- Phone ringing sound file (optional: not needed in the case the facilitator will make the call from their phone).

## Facilitation Instructions

### Setting up:

- Set up the room in advance. Ideally, the room should look like a home environment, not like a room at work for example. There are no strict recommendations regarding the room objects, but we do recommend creating a home environment.
- The headphones or phones should be trialed beforehand to see if they work. When using a phone, try to find a ringtone that sounds like an old phone, and hide this phone somewhere in the room. When using headphones make sure the sound is working when activating this from a distance.



### Briefing:

- The participant will be given objects and will be asked to place these where they would typically find them in the created environment. After doing so they will be asked to leave the room.
- From there on see '*Activity Instructions*'

## Helpful Tips



- If you don't have access to simulation glasses, try covering the lens of an old pair of glasses with vaseline to demonstrate blurred vision. Alternatively, you may also use a pair of reading glasses to simulate blurred vision



15-20 minutes

## Activity Instructions

1. Provide the participant with some items (e.g. keys, remote control).
2. Ask the participant to put on the distorted glasses and reduced sensitivity gloves.
3. Ask the participant to place their given items around the room where they would typically find them in similar environments.
4. Following this, the participant will be asked to leave the room.
5. The facilitator will then place the items in different places that are not logical (e.g. keys in a fruit bowl, or remote control in an oven; depending on the room and the items in the room). The participant will be unaware that the facilitator is rearranging these items.
6. Ask the participant to re-enter the room and instruct them to retrieve their items. Please note the participant will still be wearing gloves and glasses.
7. As the participant begins to search for the items, ring the phone/ or play the phone audio.
8. Instruct the participant that they are expecting an important call and must find and answer the phone, while also searching for their keys.
9. Before the participant locates the phone the facilitator will end the call.
10. As the participant begins to search again the facilitator will knock on the door and when the participant opens it, they will say *"I just rang the doorbell, why didn't you open the front door? Did you forget the appointment? We're running late and immediately need to go or we'll miss it."*



## Group Reflection / Discussion



Following the activity, take some time ( e.g. 10 mins; time depends on whether the scenario is individual or group based) with the participant(s) to reflect on what they experienced.

- What feelings did you experience during the scenario?
- Did the scenario help you to understand the impact of memory loss on people with dementia?
- What could be implemented to help manage these symptoms (e.g. which aids are currently used etc.)

## Additional Resources



**The following websites offer some more information on this topic and provide some practical tips:**

- <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/symptoms-and-diagnosis/symptoms/hiding-hoarding-losing>
- <https://www.dementia.org.au/about-dementia/memory-loss>