

Living with Dementia

My Life Today



“Some days I feel on top of the world, and some days I don’t. My Life Today helps me think about the things that make me happy”

Tommy, musician and person with dementia

My Life Today is a personal record to help you keep an eye on what is happening in your day-to-day life: the things that make life good, and the things that could be changed. You can work through My Life Today by yourself. Some people have found it helpful to fill it in with someone else.

My Life Today has been developed by people with dementia. It helps to identify the things that work really well, things that are missing and things that could be done a little differently.

We hope **My Life Today** will give you information about the valued things that help **you** to live your life with dementia.

This document is freely available to be downloaded and printed here:
<https://www.idealproject.org.uk/projects/mylifetoday/>

How to use My Life Today

It can help you to:

- **identify** things in your life that make you happy
- **track** how often you are doing the things that make you happy
- **plan** what action you could take to do these valued things more, or differently

You will get the most out of **My Life Today** if you use it **regularly**. This might be every day, every week or every month. Decide what suits you best. It may help you to set a reminder or ask someone else to prompt you.

Many people with dementia who have used My Life Today have said that they know what makes them happy, but writing things down helped them to see whether this was happening, and reminded them to do it.

You could choose to work through My Life Today with someone you are close to. Some people have used it to plan nice things to do together. Others preferred to use it on their own. Showing it to someone else could help them to understand the things that you want to keep doing.



Filling in the cloud chart

Make a list of things you can think of that make you happy or help you feel good. You can add more things to this list later. You can also ask other people what they think makes you happy. Sometimes it can be hard to notice this yourself.

Think about small pleasures as well as bigger things. For example, a small pleasure could be a morning cup of coffee in your favourite mug. A big thing could be going to a support group.

Simply making a list is useful... it does help to focus your mind. And obviously, you do try to work down your list. These are good lists.

(Person with dementia who has used My Life Today.)

Cloud chart example

These are examples of things that people with dementia have written that make them happy or feel good. Your list will be personal to you, but some things could be similar. You can start by writing just a small number of your own things.



Examples:

Eat sensibly

Do a crossword

Going out early

Go for a stroll in the garden

Go for a walk

Buy plants
for raised beds

Making progress with the greenhouse

Get rid of junk

Making my wife a cup of tea

Afternoon tea in the church

Listening to
an audio book

Cooking good food

Doing things to make me useful - help preparing
the vegetables, doing the pots, laying the table

Visiting a friend

shopping with a friend

Filling in the 'My Life Today' chart

Write today's date.

At the top of each page write the date.

Column 1

Choose something from the cloud chart that you would like to do today.

In the spaces under Column 1 write up to three things from the cloud chart that you would like to do today. You can use another page if you want to do more.

Column 2

When do I want to do it?

For each item you can write morning, afternoon or evening or a specific time.

Later in the day you can come back to the chart to mark how you got on in columns 3 and 4. You can also look back at what you have done at the end of the week.

I tend to write it at the end of the day. I sometimes write a bit in the middle because I'll be honest with you, the end of the day, I kind of forget what happened in the morning.

(A person with Dementia who has tried My Life Today.)

Filling in the 'My Life Today' chart continued

Column 3

Did it happen?

Mark in column 4 whether it happened. You can use a smiley face for yes and a sad face for no, or put a tick or a cross to indicate you did it.

Column 4




If it happened, what went well? or what could make it better next time?

Noting these things may help you think about planning for another day. Write any useful information, such as what made it easy to do it or whether there were any issues.

The next time you fill in My life Today you can choose new things from the cloud, or use the same things you have already done; it is up to you.

After a few days of using My Life Today you will see the things that you are doing, and things you are not doing. You may be able to use the comments in column 4 to help plan things to do next time. You could also ask someone else to help you to see a way of doing things differently.

My Life Today chart example

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Choose something from the cloud that you would like to do today	When do I want to do it today? AM or PM	Did it happen?  	What went well? What could make it better next time?
Example: Making my wife a cup of tea	Example: 8:00 am	Example: Yes	Example: I wrote a post it note by my alarm to remind me to do it. She was happy!
Example: Go for a stroll in the garden	Example: Afternoon	Example: No	Example: It was raining. Check the forecast for tomorrow.
Example: Get rid of junk	Example: am	Example: 	Example: Big task! Need to talk to my wife about what to throw away.

Other people who have used this booklet have said:

It's the normal, ordinary things I do, that are important, that work for me, that make living with a poor memory easier.

It makes you think about all the good things that there are in life that you might miss, that you might not think about, sometimes, these little things, the... the little nuggets in your life that you can overlook.



I will use it and certainly in one way, I will go back and look at it just to remind myself of what's good... and reading it occasionally and questioning is that still relevant.





Make a list of things that make you happy or help you feel good in the cloud below

A large, white, cloud-shaped area with a blue outline, intended for writing a list of things that make you happy or help you feel good.



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How to stay motivated

You will need to do a bit of work to get the most out of My Life Today.

Here are some of our ideas for staying motivated:

- Include things that you are already doing that make you happy, as well as things that you aren't but would like to. It's important to see some positive results in Columns 3 and 4!
- Sometimes the big things in life can get in the way. Make sure you include the small things in your list. They can help you cope with big life events.
- Ask a trusted person if they could help you to stay motivated. Gentle prompts or 'pats on the back' can help you stay positive. You could share My Life Today with them
- Keep it simple and specific. You want to **see** and **feel** the changes that make your life happier.
- If you are feeling stuck, take a break and come back to it. It can help you to think about things differently.

As Allison says: Don't worry if things aren't going well. Sometimes life is just like that. I've had downward spirals. But My Life Today helps me to look back and say, 'well actually, last week was an OK week and next week will be a better week.' My Life Today could be a journal of your life.

If you feel emotional as you use My Life Today, you could have a look at the Living with Dementia Toolkit, also designed by people with dementia. It is full of support, ideas and inspiration from people with dementia:
www.livingwithdementiatoolkit.org.uk



My Life Today has been created with people with dementia. Grateful thanks to Allison Batchelor, Jacqui Bingham, Tommy Dunne, Paul Hitchmough, Chris Norris and Keith Oliver who helped with the concept and design of My Life Today and to everyone who took part in the My Life Today study.