



Our Favorite Routine-Breakers to Increase Critical Thinking Skills

According to the [Alzheimer's Association](#), more than 5 million Americans currently live with Alzheimer's Disease. While this number is staggering, it becomes even scarier when you consider that number doesn't include seniors living with other types of dementia or memory loss. While dementia is a progressive disease without a cure, some research has showed that certain activities or habits can push off the onset of the disease.



One way to combat the progression or onset of dementia is to create new ways to do daily tasks. For all of us, routine is an important part of our day. However, for our brain, routine can mean less opportunity for critical thinking and judgment. Breaking certain daily routines, while maddening at first, can be beneficial to you and your brain. Here are a few of our favorite ways to break your routine and create the opportunity for your brain to do some extra thinking.

Brushing Your Teeth

Twice a day, when you brush your teeth, you have the opportunity to break your typical routine and wake your brain up. To switch up your brushing routine, try using your nondominant hand. It's harder than it looks, so be sure to brush a bit slower to avoid any accidental run-ins with your gums. You can also switch hands when you put on your toothpaste, or even shut off the faucet with your other hand.

If it seems difficult at first, you are doing it correctly! Your brain can no longer shut off for this regular activity when you break this routine.

Throwing Away Garbage

For most of us, our garbage can is always in the same place in our home. Consider switching it up by moving the location of your garbage can every month. Put your kitchen can in a new corner or move your bathroom can to the opposite of the cabinet. This small activity might frustrate you at first, but soon you will be smiling or laughing when you notice how easily you return to the familiar location.

Taking a New Route

Have you ever been driving home and "zoned out" for a few minutes? You may have returned home wondering how you got there, or you may have zipped right past your exit. In any case, your routine route allowed your brain to go on autopilot. To break this routine, consider taking a new route to and from work, the senior center, the grocery store, or other familiar location.

Nondrivers can still incorporate this change by simply changing the route they walk in their neighborhood or get around the house. Any time you can consciously take a new way to a familiar location, you create opportunities for your brain to actively engage with the environment.

If you are noticing that your loved one is exhibiting some memory loss or judgment issues, don't wait to get the help they need to remain healthy and independent. The team at Visiting Angels is ready to come alongside your loved one in their home – wherever that home may be – to provide the friendly face and helpful cues that allow them to keep their dignity and independence for as long as possible. [Give us a call](#) to find out how our services can best suit your situation.

Ready to read more about senior issues that pertain to you or your loved one? Curious about other senior topics and challenges? [Check out our Family Resource Center](#) for insightful articles, caregiver tips and other important resources.

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