



Are You Prepared for Mental Decline?

No one likes to think about cognitive decline in themselves or their loved ones. But, for many families, this is an incredibly important topic to address. In fact, 5.5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, including 10% of people aged 65 and older. When they pass away, 1 in 3 seniors has Alzheimer's or other types of dementia.¹

As financial representatives, our goal is to always provide compassionate, proactive service to our clients and their families through every life stage. We have developed the following 4 recommendations to help you protect yourself and your loved ones from the potential risks of mental decline.

1. Understand the Signs and Symptoms of Cognitive Decline

Distinguishing between cognitive impairment and common aging traits can be challenging. As we age, having forgetful moments can be normal, but other symptoms may indicate early warning signs of Alzheimer's disease, including:²

- **Memory loss that makes daily tasks difficult**, such as asking the same questions repeatedly or forgetting new information
- **Planning and problem-solving challenges**, such as struggling to track bills or follow a recipe
- **Vision changes**, such as being unable to tell colors apart or judge distance accurately
- **Confusion over time and place**, such as getting lost easily or becoming disoriented
- **Conversational challenges**, such as forgetting words or not following when people are talking

These are just a few of the early warning signs. If you notice any of these symptoms in yourself or a loved one, consult a physician and ask other family members to be on alert.

2. Schedule Family Discussions and Make Advanced Preparations

Sit down with your loved ones to talk through your feelings about aging and discuss what you would want to happen if your family became concerned about your capacity. If you have aging relatives, ask them about their current preparations and have them designate someone to check in regularly.

These conversations can bring up strong emotions, so focus on being patient, compassionate, and honest as you work together as a family.



3. Ensure Your Paperwork is in Order

Along with these important discussions with your family, you need to ensure you have the right legal protections for your financial future. Whether you are preparing for your own aging or your family members', evaluate the strength of your legal documents, such as:³

- Will
- Living trust
- Durable power of attorney for health care
- Durable power of attorney for finances

Once your legal framework is in place, you also need to set up family protocols for when and how to start taking over financial affairs. If you do not have updated legal documents, we're happy to recommend an experienced attorney from our network.

4. Know How We Can Help

We have helped many clients make these preparations, and we are always on the alert for warning signs of diminished capacity in our clients. We're happy to provide guidance to you and your loved ones when you need us. Due to our privacy laws and our commitment to discretion, however, we can only do and say so much without your explicit permission.

Please, help us help you by introducing us to your children and loved ones, and giving us written permission to contact a trusted person about unusual behavior. We also strongly recommend setting up formal legal documents to allow that person to help manage finances in the event of problems down the road.

We understand that mental decline is a difficult subject for many people. Through our support, we can help you ask the tough questions and take necessary steps to protect yourself and your loved ones from risk. If you would like to discuss how to plan ahead, please contact our office.

Footnotes, disclosures, and sources:

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¹ <https://www.alz.org/facts/>

² <https://www.webmd.com/alzheimers/guide/early-warning-signs-when-to-call-the-doctor-about-alzheimers>

³ <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/legal-and-financial-planning-people-alzheimers>