

## A Guide for Memory Café Facilitators

Welcome! My name is Steven Wilton and I am the lead facilitator and project co-ordinator for Memory Café NS. I want to share some of the practical strategies I have learned facilitating Memory Cafés to help you start your own Café.

### Getting Started and Troubleshooting Barriers:

Before the series begins, it's important to inquire about **potential barriers**, including transportation or mobility issues to facilitate attendance for in-person cafés. Assessing barriers for virtual Memory Cafés is also important. Facilitators and/or team members can provide **technical support** by calling the participant to help them solve any technical issues that are preventing them from joining the group online. Participants may also experience technical difficulties, such as troubles with audio or video, which are the most common. It's important for facilitators to familiarize themselves with **Zoom controls** on computers and tablets so that you can quickly resolve any technical difficulties participants may have. It's also important to understand other Zoom controls so that you can provide the best experience to participants. Review Zoom's controls here: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360021921032-In-meeting-controls-and-settings>.

### Welcoming and Inclusion at the Memory Café:

It's important to express at the beginning of each session that **everyone is welcome** and that **everyone belongs** at the Memory Café. One way that we can accommodate those living with memory challenges is by making everyone's names visible to help make socializing and conversation accessible and as comfortable as possible. For an in-person delivery, we use **nametags**. For virtual delivery, we make sure everyone's name shows in the Zoom window. Being able to use people's names makes the Cafés more intimate and personal, so facilitators should use first names throughout the session as they lead the activities. Our Memory Café model has a maximum **capacity** of about 20 participants to facilitate connection and hear more stories and comments from each participant. It's important to remember that dementia can sometimes interfere with motor function, including **speech**. As a facilitator, it can be important to minimize the amount of sound stimulation for the group to make the sessions more relaxing and to make it easier to hear participants who are soft spoken. In live Café sessions, a microphone can be helpful to amplify the facilitator's voice if background noise is a challenge. Dementia can also affect speech and audio comprehension, so facilitators should **speak slowly** and make **eye contact** with participants.

As is the case with any group, some participants will be more vocal than others. Facilitators can work to include even the quietest or most cognitively challenged participants by remembering what participants expressed at previous Cafés and using that to ask **specific questions** or **highlight their contributions** at future sessions. Most importantly, Memory Cafés are places for people to feel welcome, have some fun, enjoy good conversation and appreciate some beautiful art and music.....so remember to have fun too! I am available to answer any specific questions you might have about launching your own community Memory Café at the following email address: [stevenpwilton@gmail.com](mailto:stevenpwilton@gmail.com).

  
Lead Facilitator and Project Co-ordinator

