

# PERCOLATOR TIP SHEET: PROMOTING YOUR MEMORY CAFÉ



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*The ideas here were compiled from Percolator surveys, the 2022 Percolator Memory Café Network PR Working Group, the idea exchange on June 8, 2022, and shared in the Percolator Google Group. Thanks to everyone who has shared their wisdom!*

# Background

Outreach is one of the hardest tasks for many memory cafés, for three reasons:

- (1) Many people do not talk openly about dementia. Some of our potential participants have become isolated and are hard to reach. It can also be hard to both convey what memory cafés are for AND avoid turning people off with terms like “dementia” or even “memory café.”
- (2) Most members of the public are not familiar with the memory café concept, so our PR needs to explain what cafés are all about and provide a “picture” of what happens at a café.
- (3) Most café providers have limited resources. There is usually not a lot of time or money for outreach.

Cafés vary regarding their goals for attendance. Some are designed to be small. However, many café coordinators report that they would like to have higher attendance.

## Levers for increasing attendance

1. Design of café
2. Outreach before your café starts – or a “kickoff” anytime
3. Ongoing outreach
4. Keeping in touch with your participants
5. Collaboration with other cafés and other providers
6. Laundry list of outreach partners, approaches, and things to consider!

### 1. Design of Café

- Emphasis fun.
- Name of cafe
- Experiment if needed to determine a good time frame: “not too early, not too late.” Consider the time of other cafés nearby, to complement and not conflict with them. Some participants prefer morning and some prefer afternoon. Avoid 12-1pm unless you are serving lunch.
- Consider location. Best locations are very accessible, and have a “flavor” of being utilized by a broad section of the community. Good examples are a library, community center, YWCA/YMCA, arts council, or museum. Churches or other congregations are popular locations and a very meaningful and welcoming location for many; people of

other faiths may not feel as comfortable. Senior Centers are population locations and are very accessible to older adults, though people with younger onset dementia may not feel as comfortable. Residential care settings can have a hard time attracting participation.

- Virtual format is better when its hard to get to the café (traffic, parking etc) and there is good broadband/high computer use. In-person format is best when it's not hard to get to the café and broadband/computer use are not great. (And of course, it depends on the course of the pandemic.) Virtual cafés can attract people from other areas, including relatives of local participants.
- Use themes to keep gatherings interesting and timely.
- Consider different populations within your community and how activities can appeal to them – eg., men and women, different cultural communities, etc.
- Engage volunteers so that you have “hands on deck” to help everyone participate.
- Arrange seating in “table pods” and introduce participants to one another to promote interaction.
- Use microphones to make sure that every can hear one another.
- Make sure you have ways to get feedback from your participants so that you can tweak the design over time if needed.

## 2. Outreach before your café starts – or a “kickoff” event anytime

- Hold kickoff program(s) that bring in a broader audience. For example, a presentation by an advocate who is living with dementia, a Dementia Friends information session, the Alzheimer's Association, etc. During this event, do an introductory presentation about your café: its goals and what will happen at the café. Explain that most people are not familiar with this amazing free resources. Ask the audience to be your ambassadors and spread the word, and attend with someone who could benefit.
- Ask cable station to play public service announcement videos (see [www.jfcsboston.org/Percolator](http://www.jfcsboston.org/Percolator) for video file in English, Spanish and Portuguese).
- Find venues to do presentations about the memory café concept and to introduce your new café, such as provider networking meetings, church forums.
- Social media, articles in town paper, flyers, announcements in newsletters
- Begin to build mailing lists – ask providers if you can add them to your list to receive info for each café gathering.

## 3. Ongoing Outreach

- Flyers in public places
- Ask cable station to play public service announcement videos (see [www.jfcsboston.org/Percolator](http://www.jfcsboston.org/Percolator) for video file in English, Spanish and Portuguese)

- Yard signs if you have highly visible locations (cost about \$20-22 each)
- Two mailing lists: one for participants, and one for providers/referral sources
- Create a brochure and send out the dates/topics for several months in advance. (To see an example, join the mailing list for the Wisconsin Library Memory Project: <http://libraryaware.com/3712/Subscribers/Subscribe?showonlyinterestgroups=true>)
- Ask your current participants to be ambassadors. Give them flyers/blurbs/social media posts to share.
- Invite providers to attend your café so that they get a better feel for it.

#### 4. Keeping in touch with your participants

- Reminder phone call before each gathering  
Take photos at café gatherings and then give them prints at next gathering  
Celebrate birthdays and anniversaries; make it personal and welcoming.
- Consider continuing to include people whose person living with dementia has died. It may be appropriate to ask them to become volunteers. You can also give the opportunity to sponsor a café session in tribute to the person who has died.
- Find ways to involve your participants and give them a sense of “ownership” over the café. (See the [Memory Café Guide to Leadership and Other Meaningful Roles for People Living with Dementia.](#))

#### 5. Collaboration with other cafés and other providers

##### Other cafés:

- Schedule your café to complement rather than conflict with nearby cafés.
- Create a joint café calendar to share with participants and providers.
- Rotate a café across several locales, so that each locale takes a turn hosting.

##### Potential Public Relations (PR)/Outreach partners:

- Area Agency on Aging
- AARP chapters
- Alzheimer’s Association chapters
- Dementia Friendly and Age Friendly community initiatives
- Dementia Friends programs (check here to see if your state has one: <https://www.dementiafriendsusa.org/sessions-your-state-territory>)
- Senior centers
- Home care providers (Encourage clients to attend a café with their care provider - both certified and private duty providers)
- Health care providers: community-based physicians; hospitals (discharge planners/written resource guides); therapists and other mental health care providers
- Aging Life Care Managers (find registered managers: <https://www.aginglifecare.org/>)

- Friendly visitor programs through Councils on Aging, nonprofit organizations, faith communities or civic Ambassador programs (Encourage volunteers to attend cafes with the person whom they visit)
- Neurology practices, diagnostic centers
- Support groups for people living with dementia or care partners
- Meals on Wheels (send an invitation with meals)
- Residences, such as independent living, assisted living, nursing homes, continuing care retirement communities, housing developments with many older residents (Reach out to resident services advisors, or activity directors. Consider peer ambassadors or other structures to encourage friends to attend with friends)
- Down Syndrome Guilds; I/DD providers who work with older clients
- Faith communities (Remember to suggest to clergy/congregants that friends could attend cafes with friends)
- Libraries
- Schools and colleges
- Businesses (e.g., BNI network <https://www.bni.com/>)
- Chambers of Commerce (seek out related committees, such as health & wellness committee)
- Town government's recreation committee
- Restaurants or coffee houses
- Grocery stores, food pantry
- Hairdressers, barbers, beauty salons
- Look up relevant "Meet Ups" in your area and reach out
- Find high schools students to take on your café as a service learning project
- Media: print media, radio, cable TV
- YMCAs, fitness programs, e.g., Curves
- Civic organizations: Rotary (Note that Rotary in the UK was a major proponent of memory cafes: <http://www.repod.org.uk/>), Jaycees, Lions, etc.
- City Councils
- Legislative delegations (based in counties or boroughs)
- County or municipal Ambassador programs, or Municipal Welcome Wagons
- Apps that help people match with others for help and connections, such as Next Door app, Iona Care's "I am not alone program," or any other app that families in your area use. (Note that large employers may make a particular app available to their employees)
- Employee Resource Groups (usually at large corporations)
- Arts association, historical society
- PR professionals in our networks who can offer pro bono help!

## Laundry List of PR/Outreach Approaches



- Lunch & learns/short Zoom info sessions on what cafes are and how they work.
- Host an educational gathering on a broader dementia-related topic (eg. a Dementia Friends info session), and include an intro to the memory cafe as part of it. As attendees to be your ambassadors and help spread the word, because most of the public doesn't know about memory cafes.
- Join forces with several cafes within your town or region (For example, create a shared calendar, or agree to promote each other's cafes to your mailing list).
- List cafes as a standing resources with AAAs, hospital discharge planners.
- Develop a mailing list of PCPs and other providers willing to receive regular email blasts from cafes.
- Public Service Announcements on local radio; cable TV. Visit [www.ifcsboston.org/Percolator](http://www.ifcsboston.org/Percolator) to access our free 1-minute PSA video in English, Spanish and Portuguese. Many cable stations will add a banner with info about your café!
- Seek to be a guest on podcasts and other educational programs.
- Ask your cafe volunteers to help you get the word out. Being a part of the program and observing/providing joy to our participants transforms volunteers into great marketers for our Cafes. Give them PR resources to make it easy. Recognize volunteers in local paper. Designate a well-connected volunteer to be an "ambassador" to focus on outreach. Find your "influencers!"
- Invite people to attend your cafe who could spread the word. Ask them to get involved, e.g. to write cards to cafe guests.
- Post events online through local newspaper/magazine website.
- Post on Facebook groups (e.g., Dementia Action Alliance Art & Dementia page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/294443774931144>)
- List on the town calendar/town website.
- Partner with area cultural institutions (eg. symphony), advise them on how to serve people living with dementia and simultaneously ask them to reach out to their list about the memory café.
- Ask County Commissioners to issue a proclamation during National Alzheimer's Month
- Find a local reporter to write an article that can run in many local papers with info about the local café.
- Seek a national reporter (based on related articles they have published in the past) to report on memory cafes.

- Look into national media structures, e.g. [CBS Cares](#) public service announcements. Utilize Percolator Network to see if anyone has a contact
- Flyers in Starbucks, etc.
- Seek out restaurants, coffeehouses or other businesses that would like to offer a discount on carry-out or a free carry out item to cafe families as a promotion

## Issues to consider in all PR/Outreach:

- Represent people of many cultural backgrounds.
- Represent people of a range of ages; make sure those with younger onset dementia would feel included.
- Use inclusive language regarding type of dementia: lead with “dementia” rather than “Alzheimer’s” (e.g., “dementia, including Alzheimer’s”).
- Use language less likely to trigger stigma, eg. “changes in memory or thinking.”
- Be careful of the term “memory cafe” - for some, it is a sensitive term because it relates to dementia. However, people do need to know what the program is for, and the “memory cafe” term works well on Google searches.
- It is not always about memory. People living with dementia may have varied symptoms.
- People do not have a deep understanding of what cafes are, how they differ from support groups, etc. This requires more time to show/explain.
- Virtual cafes need to be represented with images and language to dispel fear/lack of familiarity with virtual platforms. Show people participating on Zoom. Show how easy it is to join a meeting - “one click!”
- Some communities do not have access to broadband, technology, or comfort using technology, so virtual cafes are inaccessible.
- To help your guests get more comfortable with a teleconference, consider offering tutorials (many good short videos are available and can be sent out to your guests), and 1:1 assistance with technology.
- It is likely that cafes will ultimately be provided in a mix of in-person, virtual and hybrid formats, including outdoors, so our PR should reflect this so that it can continue to be useful over time.
- Show how fun the cafes are!
- Make clear what cafes are for, and what the core philosophies are. They are social gatherings, a place of mutual support, for care partners, too. (Care partner includes: family member, friend, professional caregiver).

*The JF&CS Memory Café Percolator is a free resource that since 2014 has shared ideas and technical assistance with organizations starting and sustaining memory cafés throughout the U.S. and beyond. Visit us at [www.jfcsboston.org/Percolator](http://www.jfcsboston.org/Percolator)*