

Memory Strategies

Difficulty holding information consciously in mind

1. Request repetition
2. Repeat information to yourself as you hear it
3. Write key points down
4. Use a tape recorder (Good for meetings and classroom)

Difficulty ignoring distracting stimuli (Interference)

1. Refer to written information (schedules and memory logs).
2. Use cues in the context and environment.
3. Request repetition

Difficulty organizing and storing information

1. Repeat information to yourself, then rehearse it under your breath
2. Use visualization techniques
3. Use chunking strategies
4. Use associations
5. Use memory/Appointment books
6. Use mneumonics (such as rhymes)
7. Use tape recorders
8. Make lists

Difficulty retrieving specific information

1. Use self-cuing recognition techniques
2. Delay to give yourself thinking time
3. Refer to written information (lists and log books)

TRICKS TO ENHANCE YOUR MEMORY

Memory problems are commonly the result of a stroke. Besides formal cognitive therapy, you can improve your memory with practice.

1. Have a calendar in a centrally located place where you can easily look at it. Mark off the days as they pass. Write in important dates, such as birthdays and appointments. Look at this calendar before breakfast to help you plan your day.
2. Keep a notepad with a pencil in your purse or pocket. This is a convenient way to remember things that are important. Write them down! Make a habit of looking at the note pad several times during the day – mealtimes are convenient times for reviewing.
3. Wear a watch because keeping up with the passage of time can be difficult.
4. Watch a short TV program with someone, and afterward, have the other person ask questions to see how much you can recall.
5. Read a newspaper article and try to summarize it.
6. Look, listen, talk, and think about things when they occur. When learning names, be aware and pay attention. It is helpful to repeat the name when using it in conversation.
7. Think to yourself as you do things to “teach yourself”. For example, before leaving for a trip, you might say as you unplug the coffee pot, “I am pulling the plug on the coffee pot so I won’t start worrying about it a few miles away from home.” It really works!
8. Force yourself to remember by “advertising”. If you have to take clothes to the cleaner, lay them out the night before on your breakfast table so you won’t forget them the next morning.
9. Make a mental tag. When you are away from home, remember where you parked your car by finding a “tag” like the name of the street or store near where you parked or got off the bus.
10. “Chunking”. This is a useful technique for remembering lists and phone numbers. Chunk parts of them together. It is easier to work with groups of two or three than to try to remember a whole series. For example, 476-3109 can be “chunked” into 476 (four-seven-six), 31 (three-one), 09 (oh-nine).

The first time you forgot the name of a person, movie title, or an appointment, you might have said, half-jokingly, “I’m losing it!” The good news is, you are not. In most instances, a mild case of forgetfulness is not a disease like Alzheimer’s. Action can be taken to make your brain remember better.

“Neurobics” (the new science of brain exercise) can help you take charge of your mental fitness. These simple exercises stimulate the growth of the brain cells to help keep the brain younger and stronger. Neurobics uses your five senses in unexpected ways. It shakes up every day routines. The exercises are offbeat and fun, and can be done anywhere, anytime. The result is a mind fit to meet any challenge – remembering a name, mastering a new computer program, or staying creative in your work.

Routines Can Be Brain Deadening

While some routines in your life are essential, everyday behaviors that you do “without thinking” use little energy, and provide little brain exercise. Everyone profits from discovering new ways to break out of everyday routines and stimulate the brain. This pamphlet will give you some suggestions of ways to use ALL five of your senses. AND, don’t forget the 6th sense, EMOTION! Interaction with other people is an important trigger of emotional responses. Most people have a strong, built-in need for these interactions and, in their absence, mental performance declines.

Path To A Better Memory

Here are some fun and simple ways you can exercise your brain using Neurobics. Try them with your family and friends for a good discussion and plenty of laughs. (Humor, by the way, is also important)

- ❖ Without looking, dig in your purse and FEEL for your keys. Then, keeping your eyes closed, fit the key in the lock to open the door.
- ❖ Brush your teeth with your opposite hand. Try styling your hair, shaving (ouch! that could take practice) or applying makeup with your opposite hand.
- ❖ If you shower, take a bath. If you usually bathe in the tub, use a variety of things to activate all five senses. Use aromatic bath oils and soaps, sponges, body washes, loofahs, candlelight, music, plush towels and moisturizers.

- ❖ Take a different route to work. If you're driving, open the windows. If you walk, the possibilities for learning something new are even greater.
- ❖ Place a cup filled with different coins in your cup holder. At the stoplight, try to guess what the denominations are by feel alone.
- ❖ At your desk, relocate your computer mouse, phone, wastebasket, etc. While you are at it switch your watch to the other wrist.
- ❖ Use your fingers to learn Braille for controlling the elevator door.
- ❖ There's more to a coffee break than loading up on caffeine. It gives you time for mental stretching and social interaction. A 15-minute walk outdoors invigorates the body, clears the mind and opens the door to real-world stimulation.
- ❖ Turn pictures of your family, or your desk clock, upside down.
- ❖ In the supermarket or other store, change your usual route through the aisles.
- ❖ At dinnertime, have everyone switch seats. Switching seats changes whose "position" you occupy, who you relate to, your view of the room and even how you reach for the salt and pepper!
- ❖ Identify the food on your plate using only your senses of smell, taste, and touch. A food's flavor includes its texture, temperature, spiciness and even sound.
- ❖ Go camping for a different perspective than a week by the hotel pool.
- ❖ Make a family video and then play it with different background music (scary, romantic, etc.). Notice how it changes your mood and feelings about what you're watching.
- ❖ Start a new hobby, like fishing. It requires you to "think like a fish". Pay attention to the time of the day, the feel of the water, and the types of insects around you.
- ❖ Grow a garden. You will use all of your senses: feeling the earth, smelling the plants, tasting sprigs of herbs. Better yet, your brain's planning and spatial abilities are called into action as you take into account the path of the sun and how much water the plant will need, before you decide where to place your potential beauties. Later, there are other rewards: fresh fruits and vegetables, flowers and a beautiful yard. And, the ultimate reward is a more fit and flexible brain as you age.

COGNITIVE STRATEGIES

- ❖ Develop a routine and stick with it. Doing the same tasks at the same time each day helps reduce forgetfulness.
- ❖ Create a place for everything and store everything in its rightful place to minimize confusion about its whereabouts.
- ❖ Use a journal or organizer to keep track of important plans, impressions, ideas, questions that you want to ask, tasks that need to be performed and appointments to be kept.
- ❖ Use a to-do list.
- ❖ Use a planning calendar to write down important dates, events, or other information. Hang a bulletin board in a highly visible place on which you can post messages. Advance planning helps reduce the risk of forgetting.
- ❖ Focus on one thing at a time. Don't begin new tasks until the previous task has been completed.
- ❖ Take frequent rest breaks.
- ❖ Use repetition. The more often you repeat/rehearse new information, the more likely you are to remember.
- ❖ Make notes, use tabs and highlighters to highlight important information.
- ❖ Use a medication organizer that separates medicines by day of the week.
- ❖ Use a wristwatch or timer that has programmable alarms to cue you when it is time to take medications or to perform important tasks.
- ❖ Too much noise, light, activity can be overwhelming. Avoid stores and restaurants during peak times. When attending crowded places, sit near an exit so you can leave quickly if you begin feeling overwhelmed.

Situations

Remembering to take prescribed medication

Devices and Strategies

Place medication in a saucer, cup, or a special receptacle each night for the following day. When the receptacle is empty, the medication has been taken.

Form a habit of doing this every day or every week.

If administering medication to someone else, a list and dated chart can be used to check off when the medication is given.

Remembering keys, eyeglasses, or dentures

Decide the most convenient place for these items.

Form the habit of placing them in the same place each time. **NEVER DEVIATE.**

Keys may be hung near the doorway, or placed on a table or shelf, or (for a woman) in a handbag.

Eyeglasses may be hung around the neck, or placed on a night table, TV, or bookcase.

Dentures may be kept in a cup in the bathroom or bedroom.

Remembering what to buy and tasks

Lists should be organized by categories, as when shopping for food: dairy, produce, groceries, etc. Also, if there is more than one stop: bank, shoemaker, and market.

A pad should be available to jot down items as needed or when supply is exhausted.

Remembering to:

Turn off the stove, remove laundry from washer or dryer, leave on time for appointment

The timer is a useful device. Set it for the appropriate amount of time. Take it with you into whatever part of the apartment or house where you will be sure to hear it.

Remember to pack all necessary items when leaving on a trip.

List items to be packed. Some find it helpful to start with shoes and work up.

Cross off or circle items as each is packed.

Remember whether bills have been paid.

Place all bills in an envelope folder, box, or clip. As they are paid, write paid and date on the bill. IF paid by check always write on the checkbook stub before writing on the check.

Remember whether reimbursement for Medicare and / or other payments due you have been received

A notebook listing in columns, date of visit to doctor, doctor's name, the amount paid to the doctor, and a column for the reimbursement. When reimbursement is received, record it. If it fails to come, a follow-up with physician and / or insurer is necessary.

Remembering to remove frozen food from freezer

Hang up a note on the door next to the refrigerator and stove.

Remembering to serve all the items you have planned when entertaining

Make a list of the items on the menu. Check off each item as you take things out of the refrigerator and stove.

Take out serving dishes and pieces in advance

Remembering names and ages of grandchildren
Remembering names of friends and acquaintances

Write the grandchild's name and date of birth under each photo in a photo album or multiple photo frame

Look through your address book. You may recognize the name

Names are usually remembered by association. If not, take it lightly and say something like: "I remember faces, but not names."

Remembering what you came into a room or closet to get or do

Do the chore the second you think of it, or write it down for doing later

Relax—anxiety causes memory lapses

Remembering the content of a play or film

If a playbill is distributed, keep a file. If this is too bulky, keep a notebook of names of plays and places seen with a few words about them.

Remembering to replace the telephone taken off the hook or cradle

Place the phone in such a position that you must see it when you walk into the room. Use the timer as a reminder to replace the phone.

Remembering birthdays and anniversaries

Keep a calendar or special notebook for this purpose
 Make a monthly list and place it where it will be seen
 Form the habit of looking at the list or calendar weekly

Remembering appointments

Calendars are a must. Either pocket or desk
 Form the habit of consulting the calendar daily

Remembering what is read

To help concentration when reading a newspaper, turn the headline into a question. In seeking to answer, concentration and memory are improved.

Remembering one's destination when riding a bus, train, or subway

Write a few words about what you read
 Take along the written address of your destination

Remembering the day of the week or the date

IF no daily newspaper is available, TV and radio morning news usually give the date, time and day. If they are not available, use a large wall calendar.
 Each day upon rising, note the first unchecked date and check or circle it