

# Cognitive Remediation: Strategies for Memory Problems

- Robert W. Trobliger, Ph.D.
- Co-Director Memory Rehabilitation Program
- Northeast Regional Epilepsy Group

# Memory

- Why don't I remember everything?
- Should I be able to remember everything?

# Memory

- Not everything is important.
- We just don't need to remember everything.
- We just need to know how to recall or find information that is important to us.

# Memory

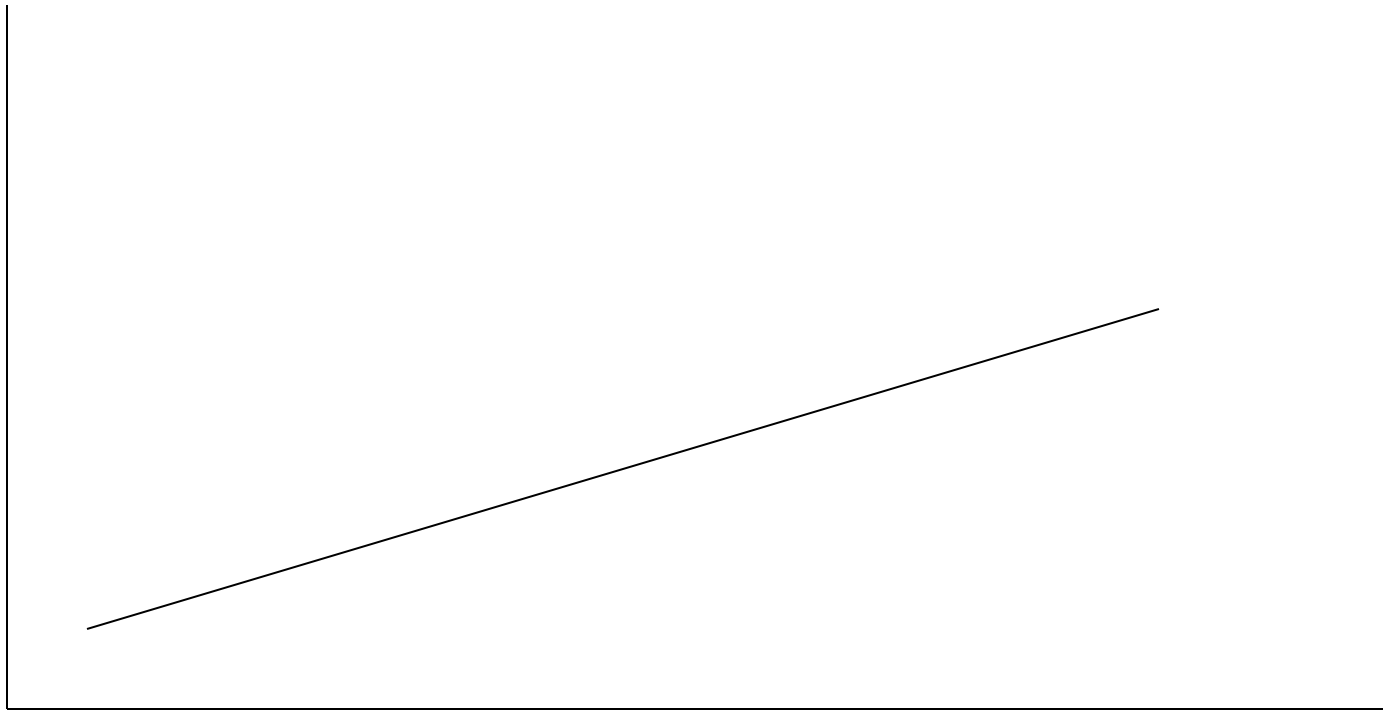
- What kinds of things are important?
- Things that are:
  - Interesting (to you)
  - Related to emotions
  - Occur regularly or need to be done regularly

# Memory

- But then why can't I remember things that ARE important?

# Memory and Age

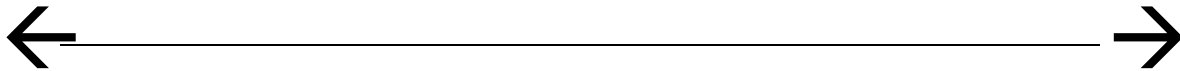
Forgetfulness



Age

# Forgetfulness

Forget a little



Forget a lot

# Memory

- So am I going to have more and more difficulty as I get older?

# Memory

- Maybe, maybe not.

A few factors are involved:

- Your physical health
- How mentally active you are
- How well you can compensate for any problems you're having

# Memory and Epilepsy

People with epilepsy

have a “triple whammy effect”

# Memory and Epilepsy

Seizures can affect memory functioning because in order for memory to work properly, the brain needs continuous self-monitoring. This self-monitoring system can be disrupted during a seizure. Memories prior to a seizure can be lost, as they have not been fully incorporated into the memory systems.

# Memory and Epilepsy

During a seizure, memory may also be affected because a loss of consciousness can interfere with normal brain processes, disrupting the encoding and storage of information. The confusion that can occur following a seizure can also prevent memory from working properly.

# Memory and Epilepsy

Some people with epilepsy can experience unusual electrical activity within the brain between seizures and this can also affect attention and memory functioning.

# Memory and Epilepsy

Whatever the physiological cause of seizures is (tumor, lesion, fever), seizures often originate from the part(s) of the brain that is important for memory.

# Memory and Epilepsy

- Temporal lobe, hippocampus—“seat of memory”
- Frontal lobes—organization, attention—important for memory

# Memory and Epilepsy

Some anti-epileptic medications may interfere with memory functioning as they can affect the speed at which the brain can process information.

# Memory and Epilepsy

On the other hand, they reduce seizure frequency which, as we just discussed, can cause memory impairment.

# Is it really memory?

- Attention
- Executive Functions
- Language
- Memory

# It is memory!

- Memory is complicated – with multiple processes
- Encoding
- Consolidation
- Storage
- Retrieval

# It is memory!

- Memory is complicated, with multiple types.
  - Sensory memory
  - Short-term memory
  - Long-term memory

# It is memory!

- Memory is complicated, with multiple types.
  - Semantic
  - Episodic
  - Procedural

# It is memory!

- Attention/memory processes are susceptible to:
  - Fatigue/Energy Level/Illness
  - Mood
  - Medications
  - Stress
  - Trying to do too many things at once

# Common Memory Complaints

- My problem is with short-term memory. I can remember things from years ago, but I can't remember things from yesterday or last week

# Common Memory Complaints

- Learning versus retrieval

# Common Memory Complaints

- I forget appointments – when I have to be or go somewhere during the day.

# Common Memory Complaints

- Prospective Memory – Remembering to remember.
- Write down appointments on calendar/in organizer ASAP
- Remember to check calendar each morning
- Set alarms – cell phone

# Common Memory Complaints

- People say it seems like I don't listen to things they say. They say it seems to go in one ear and out the other.
- People say I keep asking the same questions or saying the same things over and over again.

# Common Memory Complaints

- A matter of attention

# Common Memory Complaints

Removing distractions

- Noise

- Tasks

- Other people

Checking senses – eyesight, hearing

Asking people to slow down, repeat

# Common Memory Complaints

- Sometimes I have trouble getting the words out. Sometimes it comes back to me later, but then that's too late.

# Common Memory Complaints

Language

Working around a word

Build up vocabulary –

Read challenging material

Do crosswords

Play scrabble

# Common Memory Complaints

- I go to the store and forget what I was supposed to get. Or I remember some things but then get home and realize I forgot a few.

# Common Memory Complaints

- Rehearsal
- Visualization
- Lists

# Common Memory Complaints

- I walk into a room and forget why I went in there.

# Common Memory Complaints

- Usually a matter of distractibility
  - Mindfulness
  - Retracing steps

# Common Memory Complaints

- I forget the names of friends I have known for years. And sometimes I have trouble learning new names.

# Common Memory Complaints

- A common complaint
  - Wait for the person to mention their name
  - Wait for enough information to figure it out
  - Ask someone afterwards
  - Ask the person, admitting, “I’m bad with names”

# Common Memory Complaints

- With new names, taking time to learn it in the first place.
  - Pairing the name with some attribute about the person
  - Using the name a few times with the person at times of new meetings
  - Writing new names down

# Common Memory Complaints

- I have trouble when reading –I read and the words don't sink in. Or I can read a paragraph or a page and then realize I don't remember any of it.

# Common Memory Complaints

- Is this a matter of distractibility?

Find a quiet place to read. Or wear earphones to block distractions out.

# Common Memory Complaints

- Is this a matter of energy?
- Pick the best time of day to read.

# Common Memory Complaints

- Is the information still not sticking?
- Take notes as you read on a bookmark, separate piece of paper, in the margins.
- Refer to notes as necessary. But you may find that by writing you may not need to go back.

# Common Memory Complaints

- I forget numbers. I write them down, and they're all scrambled up. And I have problems with phone numbers.

# Common Memory Complaints

- Repeat back the numbers as you write them down.
- Ask for repetition as necessary.

# Common Memory Complaints

- I forget about things I need to get done during the day. Or I remember them later when I'm in the car and then forget when I get home.

# Common Memory Complaints

- Keep a list, checking it during the day.
- Ask others to leave notes in a regular place.

# Common Memory Complaints

- I can't remember where I parked my car.

# Common Memory Complaints

- Take a picture with cell phone
- Write down parking notes

# Common Memory Complaints

- I leave the house without the stuff I need.

# Common Memory Complaints

- Get organized – put things out the night before by the front door, by your keys. Get organized – put things out the night before by the front door, by your keys.

# Common Memory Complaints

- I put things down or put things away and then can't remember where I put them.

# Common Memory Complaints

- Put things away ASAP
- Put things where they belong.

# Conclusions: General Principles of Memory Strategies

# Attention

# Preparedness

# Organization

# Mindfulness

# Questions