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### **About Memory**

Studies have shown that the patient's adjustment can be deeply impacted by mild impairments in functions such as short-term memory. The extra effort, vigilance, and concentration needed to compensate for such mild deficits result in an enormous fatiguing effect. Such an effort produces a continuous drain on energy levels and results in chronic fatigue. Intellectual functions such as short-term memory tend to deteriorate as fatigue increases. Such practices often give rise to a vicious cycle that leads to feelings of inadequacy, discouragement, irritability, and depression.

*Neuropsychological Assessment; Muriel Lezak (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1983).*

### **Memory Strategies for Adults**

*From: The University of Nebraska in Lincoln website:*

<http://tbi.unl.edu/savedTBI/memory/strategies/html>

1. Make a "to do" list. Try to limit your list to five things and write them down. As you accomplish each item on your list, cross it off.
2. Write down directions. Put them in the same place each time.
3. Develop a daily routine. Keep your schedule written down and put it someplace where you can see it easily throughout the day.
4. Develop a system for organizing your personal information. Put your keys and your wallet in the same place each time you walk in your front door.
5. Use a planning calendar. Follow these two rules:
  - Write everything down in your planner including directions, dates, phone numbers, etc.
  - Write everything down when it's still fresh in your mind.

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6. Use cross-references. In your planning calendar, write down "Go to the movies." Next to it write, "See notes section for details."
7. Use repetition. If you want to remember something, try repeating it to yourself several times out loud, then try writing it down.
8. Focus on one activity at a time. Don't try to do several things at once and don't start the next project until the current project is complete. Try breaking up tasks into manageable small steps.
9. Make a picture book. Using pictures to remember information is often very helpful. Keep pictures of family and friends in your book, along with their names and telephone numbers.
10. Mnemonic devices: If you want to remember a name, try associating the name with a song or a picture or a rhyme. For instance, a new friend Jack could be associated with the rhyme "Jack be nimble..."
11. Create a place for everything. Everything from your keys to your daily planner should be kept in one place so you can find them again easily.
12. Use a system of reminders. Post it notes, white boards, daily planners, daily schedules, friends and family members can all serve as helpful reminder systems.
13. Use highlighters when reading to remind yourself of information you may find helpful later on.
14. Make notes while you are reading so you can easily remember what information you found helpful.
15. Learn to trust your instincts. Have confidence in yourself that you have the tools you need to use in any situation.
16. Use a backpack or tote bag. Plan ahead for upcoming activities and place things you will need in the pack or bag.
17. When you're planning your grocery list, put similar items together so you can find them easily in the store. For instance, most of the dairy items are kept together so list milk, cheese and eggs in one place. Do the same for fruits and vegetables and other items that are grouped together in the grocery store.
18. When using the oven or stove, use a kitchen timer so you don't burn anything. Kitchen timers can also be used to remind a person to take the laundry out of the washer and put it into the dryer or to remind them of any other task that needs to be done.
19. Kitchen timers can also be used to remind a person of any task that needs to be completed. For instance, if you have a 10am doctor's appointment and have to leave the

house at 9, you might set a timer for 8 to remind you to take a shower and get dressed. It's easy for a patient with a brain injury to lose track of time.

20. Use a perpetual calendar to remind you of upcoming birthdays and anniversaries. These calendars are used over and over again each year. They have the month and then the dates listed, but no year and no day of the week. Buy birthday, anniversary and other cards in bulk so you have them on hand to send easily.

21. Use a memory book to keep track of events in the preceding days and weeks. When you're not sure of what happened yesterday, consult your memory book before asking a friend or family member. This also helps to foster independence in an adult with a TBI.

Here are some ideas from actual patients:

- One patient uses his cell phone to video his wife giving him instructions such as things he needs to buy at the store. He plans it back as needed and later erases it.
- Use your cell phone to call your home phone and leave a message about something you need to remember later such as a doctor's appointment. When you return home, listen to the message and either write the information down or complete the task you need to do. Keep a pad of paper or Post It notes and a pen by the phone to make it easy to write yourself notes.
- Buy a card that calculates the tip you need to leave in a restaurant. This keeps you from having to figure out a computation in a crowded restaurant or in the company of friends.
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### **Home Practice Strategies**

1. While watching news segments, generate two key words to assist with recall of information to discuss with a family member or a friend.
2. Video tape a segment of the news from the TV and then summarize in writing what you remember. Review the video and compare information to check your recall ability.
3. After reading a magazine, book, or newspaper article, summarize key points from the item to discuss with a friend or family member later.
4. Prepare for tomorrow by recalling tasks that still need completion as well as other responsibilities that will need your attention.
5. Recall your weekly list of to-do items and compare it to your written list to check your accuracy.
6. Recall the current months important events, such as birthdays and anniversaries. Check your calendar for accuracy.

7. At the beginning of each week, recall 3-4 interesting or educational activities you completed the previous week.
8. At the end of the week, recall 3-4 people you talked to during the week. To increase the level of difficulty, try to recall what you talked about.
9. Plan a date in the near future to send a letter or pay bills. Attempt to remember to complete the task without any external cues.

### **Suggestions for Friends & Family Members**

1. Give your family member time to “remember” the word or item he or she is attempting to recall.
2. If they are having difficulty with recall, give them a cue to stimulate their memory.
3. Take the time to reminisce about past events to help your family member with recall.
4. Help your family member to clarify his or her recalled thoughts by asking a variety of questions regarding the event or the appointment.
5. Allow your family member to explain information even it is not completely clear or organized. This gives them the opportunity to build confidence and to practice giving explanations.
6. Keep items such as car keys, wallets, umbrellas, and calendars in a designated place to for improved ability to recall the location of each item.
7. Use electronic devices such as pagers, answering machines, and computers to leave messages to help remind family members to take medications or remember appointments.
8. Ask about therapy, skill areas addressed, and improvements.
9. Ask about successful compensatory strategies they may have used.
10. Encourage your family member to continue to use these compensatory strategies.
11. Realize your family member may have difficulty with recall of daily events and recently learned information despite the fact that their long-term memory for pre-injury events is still intact.
12. Be patient and sensitive.