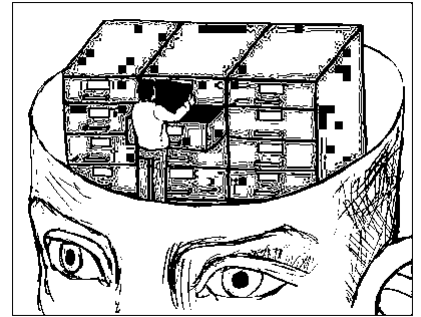


Epilepsy and Memory – Useful Strategies

Human memory, like a computer, allows us to store information for later use. We need memory for day-to-day functioning. We have short and long-term memory and to form memories, you need to:

1. Be able to concentrate..
2. Pay attention.
3. Filter out distractions.



We tend to remember more meaningful events and personal information. This is thought to be because there is a strong emotional response, the information makes sense, and it is connected to other information already stored.

New information such as people's names, telephone numbers, jokes, medications, appointments and where personal items are left are common things we forget. We don't need to retain everything, so our brain discards information not required. As we age it is common to have some degree of decline in memory.

Seizures and memory

Many people with epilepsy report problems with their memory.

Seizures disrupt normal brain activity. People who have regular seizures may have more difficulties with their memory but not everyone who has epilepsy experience difficulties.

Some seizure medications can affect memory particularly if taken in high doses, or many are being taken.

For people with epilepsy who feel they have memory problems, the cause is most likely a combination of:

- Seizures, treatment, general health, lifestyle and sleep, plus emotional and social factors

What can help?

Some tips and strategies to help you manage and possibly improve your memory are:

Be healthy, look after yourself.

- Try to exercise daily. Physical exercise increases the blood circulation to the brain.
- Eat healthy foods, drink enough water. Keep your alcohol intake to a minimum, avoid smoking or drugs.
- Get enough sleep. Sleep is essential for memory, and we function much better following a good sleep.
- Mental exercises. Keep your mind active or try something new and challenging.
- Manage stress. Try stress reducing activities such as deep breathing, meditation, or relaxation methods. If stress, depression or anxiety are a concern seek professional help.
- Speak to your specialist about any medication side-effects.



What can help?

Be organised.

- Be selective in what you try to retain. Focus on what is important and repeat important information.
- Concentrate when receiving new information and try to relate it to something familiar.
- Keep a diary, calendar or a journal and be diligent in its use.
- Plan, make lists.

Other Strategies

- Put items such as keys, wallets and sunglasses in the same place. Make it a routine when you get home
- Use diaries, calendars or organisers. Use reminders or alarms on your watch or phone.
- Reduce distractions such as TV, music, technology, and consider reducing your screen time.
- Prioritise tasks and decide what is important. Avoid taking on too many problems at once.
- Break down complex tasks into smaller steps.
- Plan activities. For instance, if your memory is better in the mornings, then do things that require more concentration in the mornings.
- Stick to a routine as much as possible.
- Use pill box or Webster pack to dispense medication. These are available at chemists.

Common problem areas

Learning New Names – some tips for when you first meet someone.

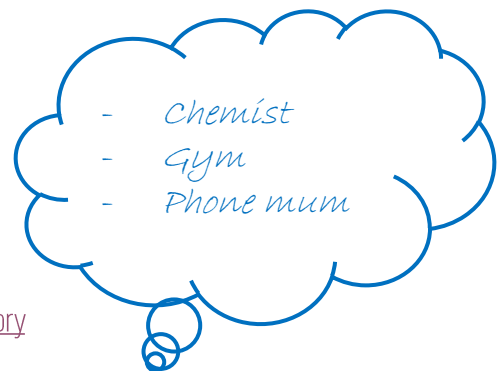
- Repeat their name immediately.
- Make a connection – My son's name is John.
- Confirm spelling – is that spelt Jon or John?
- Deliberately use the name in conversation such as "how long have you been playing the piano John?"
- Link the person's name with something that begins with the same letter "John likes juggling".
- If you are going to an event, maybe find out who will be there and rehearse their names in your head before meeting them.

Remembering where you put things

- Pay attention as you are doing something.
- Where possible use the same location to place things.
- Visualise or retrace your steps.

Further information

EAA Factsheet – [Epilepsy and Memory](#) and [How to improve your memory](#)



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