

Practical Memory Strategies

Occasional memory lapses occur in all of us and seem to become more common as we reach middle age and beyond. When we age or when damage occurs to our brains, we generally retain many of our memories from childhood and early adulthood. For example, we can still clearly recall relationships and experiences from our youth. What seems to decline most is the capacity to form new memories. Thus, we might forget the name of someone we have just met, be unable to recall where we have placed an important letter, or have difficulty learning the steps to follow in programming our new DVR or cell phone.



Such experiences can be frustrating, but fortunately there are techniques we can use to overcome many of these memory limitations. Some of these techniques are described in the sections that follow on the front and back of this page.

Problems

Remembering:

Names

To Improve:

When you meet someone, use their name in conversation.

Think about the name, do you like it?

Think of people you know well or someone famous who has the same name.

Reviewing information periodically helps us retain it. Think about the person's name later in the day and again over the next few days.

Associate the name with an image, if one comes to mind.

Record the person's name in your notebook, personal organizer, or address book.

Taking medication

Buy an inexpensive plastic medication dispenser with separate compartments for each day of the week. Fill it up at the beginning of each week. Find these at drug-stores.

Use an alarm, or buy a pill box with an alarm.

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805-988-6197



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**Problems
Remembering:**

To Improve:

**Events, appointments,
and things you must
do**

Record them in an appointment book, PDA, or pocket calendar. Review these daily, in the morning, noon, and evening.

Write yourself a note and leave it in a conspicuous place.

Ask a friend or relative to remind you.

If something must be done at a particular time, like taking medication, use an alarm. Many cell phones have these built in.

Leave an object associated with the task you must do in a prominent place at home. For example, if you need to order movie tickets, leave the newspaper ad near your phone.

Where you put things

Always put things you regularly use, like keys and eyeglasses, in the same place.

As you put the object down, make a point of looking at the place where you put it and repeat aloud where you put it.

Write it down.

**Jokes, interesting
facts, and other things
people tell you**

After you hear a joke you want to retell, write down the punchline in your pocket calendar. It will act as cue later when you try to remember the joke.

Rehearse the information in your head and then tell it to people.

Ask people to repeat what they said, ask questions about it, and/or paraphrase it back to them.

Repeat to yourself what the person said, and think about its meaning.

If the information is lengthy or complicated, use a recorder.