



POWERFUL WAYS TO SHARPEN YOUR MEMORY

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Introduction

A good memory is truly important for anyone to possess. Your memory of faces, names, facts, information, dates, events, circumstances and other things concerning your everyday life is the measure of your ability to prevail in today's fast-paced, information-dependent society. With a good memory, you don't have to fear forgetting/misplacing important stuffs and you can overcome mental barriers that hinder you from achieving success in your career, love life, and personal life.

Your memory is composed of complicated neural connections in your brain which are believed to be capable of holding millions of data. The ability of your mind to retain past experiences in a highly organized manner gives you the potential to learn and create different ideas. Your experiences are the stepping stones to greater accomplishments and at the same time your guides and protectors from danger. If your memory serves you well in this respect, you are saved the agony of repeating the mistakes of the past. By remembering crucial lessons and circumstances, you avoid the mistakes and failures made by other people.

Unless you have an illness or handicap, a poor memory is often attributed to lack of attention or concentration, insufficient listening skills, and other inherent bad habits; however, it can be honed and developed using the right methods.

Many people believe that their memory gets worse as they get older. This is true only for those who do not use their memory properly. Memory is like a muscle - the more it is used, the better it gets. The more it is neglected, the worse it gets. This is the reason

why older people have more trouble remembering than younger ones. However, people increasing in age can overcome this dilemma and can even further improve their memory by continuing their education, by refining their minds, by keeping themselves open to new experiences, and by keeping their imagination working. An important thing to realize is that different people have various ways of learning. The way in which people learn is often a factor determining the subjects they choose to study, instructors they relate to, and careers they select.

Memorization or retention of data operates by loading images, sounds, taste, smell, and sensation (touch) in a very organized and meaningful combination in our brain. There are three types of memory.

Sensory Memory is where temporary information is briefly recorded. Images such as a picture in a magazine and the design on your customer's clothing are momentarily stored in the sensory memory. It will be quickly replaced by another sensory memory unless you do something to retain it.

Short-term Memory, characterized by 20 to 30 seconds of retention, involves a limited amount of information, and is necessary in traditional processing of experiences and ordinary data gathering (everyday sensation and perception). For example, you were taught by your professor some great techniques on how to easily solve complicated Math problems. The next time you take a Math exam, you may possibly remember some of the formulas, but it's doubtful you'll be able to recall and apply all the methods being taught.

Long-term Memory involves consolidation and organization of complex knowledge and information for further reference and other cognitive (mental) processing

such as the application of learning or information into meaningful experiences. Examples would include your birthday, your father's name, and your home's appearance.

Short-term and **long-term memories** are concerned with how you continually organize data that are stored in your brain. In short, human memory is like a vast and complicated yet organized library, rather than a trash can or disordered store room.

In order for you to further develop your memory capacity in various tasks, it would be helpful if you consider points and ideas in improving your memory. This would make your retention practices more efficient and sharper.

Chapter One Sharp Memory Factors

If someone was to read a list of words to you, it's most unlikely that you will remember all the words in the list. You'll be able to recall most of the words at the beginning, some at the middle, and a few at the end. These effects are known as primacy (words at the beginning) and recency (words at the end).

The only way that a normal person can effectively recall all of the words in the list, is if he applies a mnemonic technique to help him remember. You'll also find that it's easier to recall a word if it's repeated several times in the list, or if it's related to the other words in any way, or if it stands out among the other words (for example, the word "ruby" will stand out from a list of vegetables).

To take advantage of your primacy and recency, you must find a middle ground. If you are doing something that requires a lot of thinking and you do this non-stop for hours, you'll find that the dip in the recall between the primacy and recency can be quite considerable.

If, on the other hand, you stop to take breaks too often, your brain will not really reach its primacy because it keeps on getting interrupted. In a more practical application, instead of continuously studying or working for hours, you might want to try pausing and resting after 30-50 minutes of working, just to give your brain time to refresh itself and to maximize the time when your primacy and recency are balanced.

Contrary to popular belief, being smart is not synonymous to having a good memory or good retention. You don't have to force yourself to study and understand more in order to improve your memory; the key is actually in your lifestyle, your attitude, your diet, and your habits.

You Are What You Eat

It is often said that your brain is probably the greediest organ in your body, and it requires a very specific type of nutrition from your diet. It shouldn't be surprising then that your diet affects how your brain performs, and it performs well with a steady supply of glucose. Before you go out of your house in the morning, it would be great if you can give your brain the fuel it needs by eating a hearty breakfast. A salad packed full of antioxidants, including beta-carotene and vitamins C and E, should also help keep your brain in tip-top condition by helping to reduce damaging free radicals (damaging molecules). As you grow older, your brain has lesser capacity to defend itself from daily threats like free radicals, inflammation, and oxidation. That's why aging people need more nutrition than younger ones.

Free radicals are like cavities to your teeth; they slowly build up if they're not cleaned out. As the brain cells grow older, they sometimes stop communicating with each other. As an effect, it slows down essential processes like thinking, short-term memory retrieval, and regenerating new cells. Therefore, anti-oxidants are essential to maintain not only good health, but a good memory as well. Good sources of anti-oxidants are:

- ***Vitamin A and beta-carotene:*** Carrots, spinach, cantaloupe, winter squash

- **Vitamin C:** Citrus fruits, broccoli, strawberries, tomatoes
- **Vitamin E:** Nuts, seeds, vegetable oil, wheat germ

Studies show that fatty food that causes atherosclerosis (clogging of arteries) are also the same type of food that disrupts neural activities. Cut back on the fat and replace it with foods rich in anti-oxidants. Nothing will replace a well-balanced meal, but to make sure that your body doesn't lack any of its nutritional needs, it would be a good idea to take food supplements. As the name implies, they're supplements, and not replacements.

Scientific research also indicates that eating fish can indeed sharpen your memory. Most fish fat contains the polyunsaturated fatty acid DHA, which performs a significant part in the brain development of young children. Tests show that kids who consume adequate foods containing DHA score better on IQ tests than those who take lesser amounts of DHA. Fish also contains omega-3 fatty acids which opens up new communication centers in the brain's neurons. This allows your mind to operate at its peak performance.

Another significant finding suggests that smoking can affect the ability of the brain to process information properly. Chain smokers have higher risks of impairing their visual and verbal memories. So the next time you think of smoking, remember that it's not only dangerous to your health, but you are sacrificing your memory functions as well.

Caffeine and alcohol causes anxiety and nervousness. This may hamper information from properly entering your mind because memory works best when you are relaxed and focused.

Reduce Stress

Medical researches show that people who are always anxious produce “stress hormones” like cortisol, which damages brain cells. Make it a point to do something that will relax you everyday. Try meditating, yoga, drinking tea, taking a long bath ... whatever works for you. A very effective method to reduce stress is deep breathing and visualizing the expected outcome of any situation to turn out well. Don't forget to get enough rest.

Poor memory is often a result of poor self-image. After all, it all starts and ends in the mind. So to have a healthy mind, believe that you can achieve anything you desire. Boost your self-esteem and be confident in your abilities. Your attitude should be supportive of your goals.

Cardiovascular exercises like walking improves blood circulation and are good for the heart and brain. Research also indicates that walking helps release hormones that aid in regenerating new brain cells. If you're bored with just plain walking, engage into sports that you love. Play basketball, volleyball, tennis, or anything that excites you. By exercising, you can lessen your chances of developing high blood pressure which contributes to memory loss when you get older. So get up and get moving. Not only will you be getting a fit and healthy body, but you'll also sharpen your memory and improve your creativity. Not to mention the fun and camaraderie you'll be getting with your teammates and competitors.

Just like any muscle, you also need to exercise your brain so that it doesn't deteriorate. Engage in games that will help you think. Talk to people, read informational books, listen to educational tapes, and make it a habit to continuously learn and

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