

An Ounce of Prevention

Complimentary

March 2018

Issue 255

Printed by:

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4 of the Most Effective Ways to Improve Your Memory

Memory is a basic skill we could all generally use more of. From remembering to buy something from the store to not forgetting to send that email first thing in the morning, memory plays an important part in every area of life. But how do we improve our memory? Not only to enhance our memory now but also to preserve it as we grow older. Fortunately, there are a ton of ways to enhance your memory and most of them involve slightly modifying things you do each and every single day, so they're super convenient.

*"Memory... is the diary that we all carry about with us."
– Oscar Wilde*

Our ability to remember (or not remember) things is a consistent aspect of daily life, from our personal life to professional efforts and realizing our goals and dreams. It's such a fundamental skill, though, that we don't often put much more than a second thought into it. However, with a little work, you can improve your memory. And this can make a big difference in improving your life. Here are four ways to improve your memory:

1. Meditate

Meditation has been touted as a cure-all by some, and while it's hardly that, it is incredibly useful for many reasons. One of those just so happens to be improving our memory. In a study by researchers at the University of California Santa Barbara, forty-eight undergraduate students were asked to take either a mindfulness meditation or nutrition class several times a week for two weeks. The result? Test scores improved noticeably in the mindfulness meditation group. In addition, their scores improved from before and after when taking working memory tests.

2. Try a Brain Game

Brain games are another great way to improve memory. There are now dozens (if not more) of great brain games on smartphone app stores that have been either developed or endorsed by leading neuroscientists.

One great example is Lumosity, an app I've personally used previously for several years. After just a few weeks worth of short, daily ten-minute sessions the effects on brain health are noticeable. Brain game apps such as this have been shown to improve working memory, attention, focus, and much more.

3. Eat Right

Surprisingly, the foods you eat have an effect on your memory as well. Lower carb, ketogenic diets which are high in good fats and proteins have been shown to improve memory.

In a study published in *Annals of Neurology*, women who consumed more saturated fats from red meat and butter tested worse on thinking and memory tests compared with women who ate less of each.

There's a lot of mixed information out there, but in general, it's been found that if you follow a good, basic diet (less bad fats and carbs, more good fats and veggies) it can help improve your memory.

4. Sleep More

Sleep is critical for a lot of things. It turns out, getting the recommended amount of sleep can also help improve your memory.

Research has shown that sleep is particularly useful for what is called memory consolidation, with most of the effects occurring during deep REM stages of sleep.

So, what should you do to take full advantage of this? For one, make sure you're sticking to a consistent sleep schedule. Going to sleep at the same time each night will program your body and mind to get ready to rest each night at the same time. If this fluctuates wildly, the body won't have the time to acclimate.

Also, make sure you're getting the recommended amount of sleep each night. Everyone is different, with some operating just fine on six hours while others need ten. However, in general, if

you're getting eight hours you should be fine. From there, just pay attention to your body to make the necessary adjustments.

Memory plays an important part in virtually everything we do each and every day. Fortunately, there's a lot we can do to improve it. Whichever you choose, use the points above that make the most sense to you to improve your memory and, consequently, every area of your life.

~ by Matt Valentine

<https://www.goalcast.com/2018/01/13/improve-memory/>

When to be Assertive, When to Hold Your Tongue

It's important to be authentic, but in our relationships, we need to also be smart. We need to be strategic. Expressing every thought and feeling we have doesn't serve us, or our connections with others.

But you don't want to stifle yourself and end up frustrated and resentful either. So here are some ideas about assertiveness versus keeping your own counsel—for a while, at least.

1) Be honest with yourself, first.

Consider the situation and all the variables; consider how frequently it's occurring; consider your role. If you focus only on the other person, you might be missing a key part of the equation. Where do you fit in?

Don't discount your emotions. They're giving you valuable information. Anger or hurt are like blinking neon signs telling you, "Pay attention." But once your feelings have alerted you, that doesn't mean you want to immediately act on them. Especially if your emotions are intense, they can temporarily block rational thought. So being able to give yourself a time-out can be useful.

2) Figure out if what feels so intense in the moment is really a significant issue.

Sometimes you're hormonal, or you haven't eaten, or you've allowed other problems to build up so while the current issue isn't big, it feels big. It's the straw that's broken the camel's back. And then expressing a small thing as if it's a big thing loses credibility for you. The person you're talking to might more easily dismiss your feelings.

So getting to the heart of what's really bothering you is key. When you express yourself, you want to be sure it's about the true issue. That true issue might be the accumulation of what hasn't been said before.

3) Once you know that you do need to speak up, do it vulnerably.

Yes, I'm talking about I-statements. I'm talking about expressing not simply anger, which is the uppermost level, but what lies underneath it—like hurt, disappointment, sadness. Those are the emotions that will draw others to you, while a strong expression of anger pushes them away. It makes them want to defend themselves rather than hear you.

Very few things are actually a five alarm fire, even if it feels like it at the moment it happens. Remember that you don't have to say it the second you feel it; you just want to make sure that you're saying what needs saying, in a relatively timely manner. And if you don't care by the next day, then be glad you just let it go rather than waste everyone's time and energy.

In ongoing relationships, you can go back to something if it continues to eat at you. There's no statute of limitations. What matters to you matters to the relationship. It's better to take a little extra time so that you can assert yourself productively rather than race to get it out and risk doing damage.

The point of telling others how you feel is to ultimately connect you. Communication lifts all boats.

~ by Holly Brown, LMFT

https://blogs.psychcentral.com/bonding-time/2017/07/when-to-be-assertive-when-to-hold-your-tongue/?li_source=LI&li_medium=popular17

The 4 S's of a Healthy Relationship

One of the questions I'm asked most frequently in my psychotherapy practice is: "What is a healthy relationship?" To many, this is a great mystery as they have not had adequate or sometimes even any models of a positive, loving relationship.

As with most challenges we experience, the answer is surprisingly simple. The 4 S's of healthy attachment — Safety, Security, being Seen and Soothed — were originally used for helping parents create loving bonds with their children. These same four ideas can help any couple create a healthy relationship, even if they haven't known one previously.

Our brains are designed to need the 4 S's. Providing them for your partner can help you receive them as well.

1. Safety

We certainly need to be physically safe, but emotional safety is just as important for a healthy relationship. We can create a safe place for each other by using soft tones of voice and "I" statements to bring up difficult topics. For example, imagine if your partner said in a harsh tone, "You need to take out the garbage!", instead of "Honey, I'm overwhelmed with housework and would appreciate help with the garbage." To which would you respond best?

When someone feels unsafe, our brain tells us immediately to fight, flee or play dead (meaning zone out or withdraw). When someone feels safe, we want to be with them, love and nurture them.

We increase a feeling of safety through being vulnerable. "Vulnerability is a key aspect in healthy attachment," says Bernadette Hayes, LCPC, a Chicago therapist. "Not being afraid to go to your partner to seek comfort seems like a rather simple thing to do, but many people find it difficult and even scary to let someone know they need them." Yet by being vulnerable, we increase each other's ability to feel safe enough to bond.

2. Secure

Security is a sense of safety combined with stability. We need to feel our partner is sticking with us through the natural ebbs and flows of the relationship. Secure partners don't easily threaten to leave the relationship. They also reassure each other they're in the relationship to stay either directly or through their actions. Security also relates to how the couple connects with each other implicitly.

"Security is an overall deeply felt state. For secure couples an argument is just a temporary blip that doesn't threaten their bond," says Hayes. "Couples that are securely attached seem to be willing to broach difficult topics and have conversations to arrive at some resolution and often report feeling more bonded afterward."

3. Seen

We need to feel seen by our partner. This means we need to feel understood. No one will perfectly understand their partner all the time. The good news is that just trying to understand or see the world through a loved one's eyes makes a healthy difference.

Rebecca Nichols, LCPC, a Chicago therapist who specializes in relationships and dating, tries to help partners go deep in sharing how they see each other, "Instead of a general statement such as 'you are always there for me,' I ask them to elaborate." She encourages specific statements, "You always cheer me on to try new things, even when I doubt myself" carries much more weight."

Being seen through the eyes of our loved ones helps build one's sense of self. If there is a particularly fraught disagreement, partners may have a hard time trying to see their partner's perspective. One remedy is to try to visualize the partner as the child they once were and imagine what that child is seeing and feeling. It's always easier to empathize with a child.

If you realize you are having a hard time understanding your partner, mirroring back verbatim or paraphrasing what you just heard them say helps to clarify if you heard correctly. If you didn't understand correctly, the speaker can clear up any misunderstanding.

4. Soothed

A healthy relationship soothes our nervous system. Studies have shown that experimentally inflicted pain registers less when a safe and loving partner is holding our hand. The partner holding the hand of a person in an unhappy relationship, however, increases the pain response. We can ask ourselves at any given time if we are acting in a way that is soothing. If not, we can take the time to breathe through our noses to calm our own nervous system and then make a repair with our partner to help soothe them.

Making positive physical contact every day is an important way to soothe each other. For example, renowned couple researcher John Gottman talks about the importance of a daily 6-second kiss. He also notes the importance of soft tones of voice to help couple's nervous systems stay soothed.

The benefits of a healthy relationship are many both for the couple and individual. "When my clients move from unhealthy to healthy relationships I often see growth in their own acceptance and belief of themselves" says Nichols. "Their self-confidence and self-awareness become heightened and this often translates to increased satisfaction overall and healthier relationships outside of the romantic realm."

Hayes says that when she sees couples moving from an anxious or distant attachment to a secure connection, "They approach each other with more curiosity and less judgment. They become more playful... and a disagreement becomes just that. It doesn't linger or threaten their bond."

At any given time, each partner can ask themselves if they are providing the 4 S's. If both are, that's a healthy relationship. If not, positive change is just an S away.

~By Kirsten Belzer, LCSW, CHT

<https://psychcentral.com/blog/the-four-ss-of-a-healthy-relationship/>

Brain and Behavior:

How Brains are Built: Core Story of Brain Development

<http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/video/how-brains-are-built-core-story-of-brain-development>

Building Brains is Child's Play

<http://www.brainstory.org/>

Parenting Corner:

Taking Playtime Seriously

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/29/well/family/taking-playtime-seriously.html>

How Not to Talk to a Child Who is Overweight

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/20/well/family/fat-shaming-weight-stigma-bullying-childhood-obesity.html>

5 Habits that Disconnect You From Your Kids

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/5-habits-that-disconnect-you-from-your-kids/>

The Whole Brain Child - Animated

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vBEI79_oQE

**Copies of *The Whole Brain Child* available in the office

Self- Help Corner:

Alcoholics Anonymous:	780-424-5900
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org	
Al-Anon/Alateen:	780-433-1818
Support Network / Referral Line:	211
Distress Line:	780-482-4357
Cocaine Anonymous:	780-425-2715

Informative Links:

The National Women's Health Information Center:

<http://4woman.gov>

75 Things You Can Control

<https://blogs.psychcentral.com/weightless/2017/09/75-things-you-can-control/>