

*Living Well:*

# Managing Memory



Many people with medical and psychological conditions can have memory issues and can have a real impact on your day to day activities. You may notice certain times and situations that make it harder to remember information. For example, fatigue, being distracted, and slowed thinking can make it that much harder to take information in and remember it later. Starting with practicing getting good rest, focusing one thing at a time, and rehearsing to digest information can be helpful.

When problem solving forgetfulness, first start with what you already have found best works for you:

**What organizational strategies do I have in place that help me?** Think about what is already helping you with remembering. Calendars, designated places for item, email reminders, to-do lists, etc. are common strategies people use. Often it can be a helpful start to think about why your systems works for you when problem solving other memory challenges. Tracking what works can be a great place to start. Below is an example of one way to do this:

**Am I a visual or an auditory person?** Knowing your strengths can be crucial when developing your plan to tackle your forgetfulness. Think about the last time you remembered something easily. Was it easier if you also paired information with a picture? For example, remembering where your car is parked because you took a mental image/took a picture. Alternatively, was it easier to remember if you said it aloud/made up a silly song?

What was going on when I forgot something?	What didn't work?	The strategy I will use to improve my memory for this information...	Was this strategy successful? What should I change?
I forget where my keys are, when I need to leave the house.	I don't have a designated place for my keys. I do have one for wallet, which has been helpful.	Have a designated place for keys.	I got out of the house sooner, because my wallet was in its place.



## Possible memory strategies to try:

- **Minimize distractions – turn off dinging reminders** and simplify the visual environment around you to make it easier to take information in to recall it later.
- **Use multi-sensory techniques** to help you remember as you are learning – for example, when learning a new task, rather than just listening to verbal instruction, say it aloud and/or practice doing it.
- **Group things together and having designated places** – Associating things that naturally go together can make it easier to remember- for example, taking your medications with meals. Also, having an assigned place for items and consistently putting items back can be helpful, i.e. basket for keys by the door, notepad by/on the phone, etc.
- Set up **automatic reminders** on your phone using an electronic calendar.
- Have a daily **routine**. If you get into a routine, things become habit and the pressure is taken off your brain to remember what you are supposed to be doing. For example, you may want to try having the same morning routine. Also consider using this for less frequent activities. For example, try to consistently park in a similar place when you go shopping.
- Use a **daily planner** – being consistent about writing things down in your daily planner can make a huge difference. To keep this information fresh in your mind, pick a daily consistent time to review your planner to keep this information.
- Use an **organized and categorized system** – consider labels on drawers and using categories to file information. For examples- file bills, letters, reports, medical information, etc. in categories so you know where to look for each. Try to use a similar system across paper and electronic platforms.
- Create **'To Do' lists that are clustered by urgency of needing to be done**. Cluster to-do items that need to be done sooner rather than later. Check off after you address each item, to help tracking.
- Use **sticky notes** around the house in prominent places.
- Have a **central notice board/calendar** to help reminding loved ones of joint tasks– this can be useful to reduce confusion and missed information. Remind others to look at it frequently to keep info fresh.
- Optimize your **watch/phone beepers/alarms**, especially if this has been useful to you in the past.
- **Associate photos and names/significant features** to help you remember new people. The sillier the better! For example, you may meet someone named Alice and you might picture her wearing the *Alice in Wonderland* dress.
- Use hand-held tape **recorders**, iPads, and cell phones for recording ideas, pictures, conversations, and other information that you want to remember.
- Create an **emergency card** and have it with you in your purse or wallet at all times. Include important names and phone numbers, as well as health information, passwords, and anything else that you require quick access to in stressful circumstances.
- **Bring someone with you to important appointments**, or ask permission to audio record the appointments.