



Sharpening Your Memory

4 simple ways to give your brain power a boost

Where did I put my car keys? What is the name of the movie I saw last week? What did I come into this room for? Sound familiar? If so, you are not alone and this doesn't mean that you have the beginnings of Al-

zheimer's disease (AD). Changes in memory are common in middle and older aged adults. In fact, the most common complaints from these two groups of people include remembering names and words.

In addition, most middle and older aged adults are aware that they can no longer multitask as they did in their younger years. Our aging brains are less efficient than in years past; therefore most memory-related complaints are for recent or short-term memory vs. older past memories. Learning new information also requires more time as we age and recall of old information may be slowed. That said, while these changes may cause some frustration in daily life, these normal changes should not interfere with daily living. In fact, most age associated changes related to recall of names, words, faces can improve when individuals learn some new techniques to sharpen memory skills.

It is very important to first remove negative expectations about memory. If you say, "I'm not good at remembering names," then you won't remember someone you just met! People who have excellent memories often utilize the following strategies:

1. Actively **OBSERVE** and think about what you want to remember. Use all of your senses. Being active in learning information heightens your abilities to look at details more closely, smell, touch and listen more carefully. In other words, pay attention to what or who you want to remember.
2. **ASSOCIATE** or link what you want to remember with what you already know. For example, if you meet a new person named Barbara, think about someone you new in the past named Barbara. You may learn that Barbara is from Boston or owns a poodle or loves to cook. Associate any/all of the information you learn about Barbara to other over learned memories as this will link the new information and become more meaningful.
3. **VISUALIZE** a picture in your mind of what you want to remember. Using the example of meeting Barbara, build upon that by visualizing Barbara from Boston cooking a lobster. Sometimes using whacky or fantastical images create the most robust memories, but for most people, will require some practice as we tend to be very logical and serious as adults.
4. **ACTIVELY THINK** and expand on the details that you want to remember. The more details you can gain by listening and asking questions will add more meaning and likely be remembered.

More about Memory Training



Q. What is it?

A. Memory training is a five-week, two-hour interactive educational program that provides instruction, in class practice and skill-building at home. Based upon the work of Dr. Gary Small, author of "The Memory Bible," participants acquire a variety of strategies to improve memory for names, faces, words, numbers, and more!

Q. Where can I take a class?

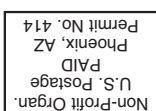
A. We have numerous classes located throughout the Valley. For a location near you, go to the Banner Alzheimer's Institute Web site: www.banneralz.org (keyword: Memory Training) for details or call (602) 839-6850.

Q. Is there a cost?

A. The cost is \$25 and covers five-weeks of instruction and your manual.

Q. How can I register?

A. To register call (602) 830-6850 or email vicki.mcallister@bannerhealth.com



Banner Alzheimer's Institute offers a five-week Memory Training program developed by the UCLA Center on Aging. These classes are held throughout the Valley and intended for people without memory issues, including Mild Cognitive Impairment or Alzheimer's disease or related dementias. Research demonstrates that participants in this program report a significant improvement in their memory abilities in just five weeks and that the benefits last for years to come. Join us and see how you can sharpen your memory in 2011! For more information on memory training, call (602) 839-6850.

Tip on Brain Health: Stay Engaged!

Staying mentally engaged and continuing to learn new information may slow cognitive decline even in older aged adults.



Ask The Expert

Jan Dougherty, MS, RN
Director, Family and Community Services



Dear Jan:

I absolutely hate crossword puzzles and Sudoku. What else can I do to improve my memory?

Signed: Motivated to Try Something New

Dear Motivated,

You are certainly not alone in your dislike of crossword puzzles and Sudoku. The reality is that we don't fully understand what type of mental exercise is the best. What we do know is that staying actively engaged in learning and trying new things can have a very positive benefit that lasts long into our later years of life. A couple of factors that are very important in exercising the brain include novelty and intensity. It is essential that we keep learning new things. Therefore, even those who complete The New York Times crossword puzzles need to try something new as they have long learned the strategies needed for successful puzzle completion. It is also important to increase the time involved in exercising the brain. Like exercising any other muscle in the body, the muscle only builds more strength as it is challenged in the intensity of the workout. Many of us are likely to get lazy and not push ourselves therefore I would encourage you to gradually build the amount of time you spend in your daily "cognitive work out."

Here are some ideas to keep your daily work out fresh and interesting and won't cost you a lot of money:

- Mix up your daily routine by taking a different route to work, trying a new coffee shop or completing a task in a different way.
- Get out some of your old board games and engage your family members in a game of Scrabble, Battleship, Monopoly or the like. All of these games require thinking, planning and strategy (good for the "executive functioning" part of your brain!)
- Work on a jigsaw puzzle with a friend. The social interaction is very brain healthy and piecing together the puzzle will work on spatial relationships.
- Read a book that teaches you something new OR read the opinions of others that oppose yours and contrast your differing opinions!
- Take some dancing lessons as you will have to think about what you are doing, coordinate your steps and remember your moves. Here you can combine physical exercise with memory and sequencing!
- Get together with a family member who owns a Nintendo Wii and learn some new games that are fun and interactive. Some of the Wii Sports activities will also help you with getting your heart rate up and balance improved.
- Go to your local bookstore or library and check out the growing number of books that provide unending ideas and opportunities to continue to grow new neuropathways!

Just as routine physical exercise enhances your sense of endurance and well-being, your routine cognitive workouts are likely to produce a greater sense of staying sharp!

January Beacon Bits



Come Out to Jam!

Calling all musicians to join in a "Monthly Jam Session" at the Herberger Institute ASU School of Music on the First Friday of each month from 10a – 11:30a, ASU Community Services Building, 201 E. Curry Road. Bring your instrument and have fun playing and singing along to some of your favorite tunes. This FREE event has easy access and ample free parking. Call 602-839-6850 to register.

Don't Miss: February GPS Lecture

February 11th GPS for Memory will feature Dr. Paul Bendheim talking on "Get Up & Get Moving: Physical Exercise and the Brain." Participants will learn the benefits of physical activity and participate in some exercises that also get you thinking! Call 602-839-6850 to register.

Free Caregiving Classes

Free Caregiving Classes are open for registration throughout 2011. For a full menu of classes, please visit www.banneralz.org (keyword: classes) or call 602-839-6850 for more information.

This newsletter is made possible by the generous support of Banner Alzheimer's Foundation.

For more information visit BannerHealth.org/AlzFoundation or call (602) 747-GIVE

Our Mission

To end Alzheimer's disease without losing a generation, to set a new standard of care for patients and their families, and to forge a model of collaboration in biomedical research.

Have a question?

To submit your question for future consideration email us at baiinfo@bannerhealth.com