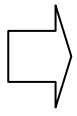


# Making Memory Stick

Memory & Learning with Seniors  
Research findings of the Carnegie Learning Centre



**First: A little bit of background information...**

## What is Memory?

Memory is the ability of the brain to **store, retain & recall** experiences. The primary purpose of memory is to guide our actions in the present by using information we have gained in the past. Survival! Where did I find that berry patch....

## Brain Biology & Memory Types

People talk about two kinds of memory: **Short-term & Long-term** memory.

**Short-term** memory is when information is kept in your head only long enough to use it momentarily e.g. doing mental arithmetic

**Long-term** memory is when information from short-term memory is transferred to the hippocampus (part of the brain) for encoding. Basically, the neurons involved in generating the original experience are re-activated.

**There are five types of memory that are used for different purposes.**



**Episodic** – memories usually unfold like a movie from your point of view, complete with sensations and emotions

**Semantic** – memory is non-personal, factual knowledge



**Working memory** – the capacity to hold information in mind for just long enough to use it



**Procedural** – these are body memories from learned actions like walking, swimming, riding a bike

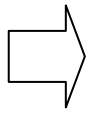


**Implicit memories** – these are memories we don't know we have! For instance, you may dislike a certain person “for no apparent reason” because they remind you of someone nasty (The Human Brain Book, Rita Carter, 2009)

**Memory that is stored with more than one sense (sights, sounds, smells, tastes) has greater sticking power.** These memories can be re-activated or recalled from more places in the brain. So, you have a greater chance of re-calling or remembering. Yes!

**Focus.** It is *biologically impossible* to learn something you are not paying attention to. Learning requires that a learner's attention is captured, and that the learner is engaged. **People become engaged when they find *meaning* or an *emotional connection*.**

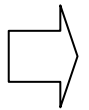




## ***Next: Here's what we found...***

### **Brain Health – A healthy brain = better memory**

- **RELAX.** A relaxed brain is more efficient than a scared one.
- **Exercise!** Stretching and gentle movement helps memory by increasing blood flow, mood, and self-esteem. It also activates nerves that stimulate brain function.
- **Go Rote.** Simple memorization exercises build memory 'muscles'
- **REST.** Brain 'work' is important, but as with our bodies rest is too. Regularly focus on a simple, beautiful thing for 30-60 min.
- **Seek Wellness.** Memory can be impaired by depression, anxiety or isolation. Social contact, friendship, laughter and a sense of belonging can help seniors progress.



## ***Finally: Here are some ways to apply it...***

### **Good Practices for Helping Seniors Learn**

#### **Make a Safe Environment**

- As much as possible, help seniors feel safe and free from distractions so that both they and their brains can relax.
- Begin your time by asking how their day has been to help them get oriented and feel welcome.
- As you explain, use lots of detail. Write it down so they can refer to it later.

#### **Use More Than One Sense**

- Don't just say it, write it. Don't just write it, have them write it too.



#### **Try Memorization Exercises**

- Take a few minutes to memorize a list of a few items. Do this for each lesson.

#### **Add Some Physical Activity**

- Take a break to do some gentle exercises. This can be really fun!



#### **Keep It Simple**

- Remember that seniors often learn more slowly. Keep instructions simple.

#### **It's OK, Repeat It Again**

- If you think you've repeated yourself too many times – keep going!
- Try to use different words or methods (eg. say it, then mime it).



#### **Stay Positive, Be Friendly, Have fun!**

- Make learning accessible by using examples that are meaningful for them.
- Remember socializing as a key part of your time.
- Tell jokes. Smile! Enjoy yourself!



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**BC Coalition of People with Disabilities**



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