



CONNECTIONS

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Feature of the Month

EFAP/North

1095 Cassells Street

North Bay, ON

PIB 4B1

Phone: 494-8086

1-800-266-3506

Fax: 494-1042

E-mail: efapnorth@vianet.ca

www.efapnorth.com

For more information and to submit articles contact

Debbie Maltby,

Administrative Assistant

at EFAP/North

How to stop forgetting all those things we need to remember

Sometimes I walk into the kitchen and forget why... One day I totally blanked when I tried to enter my PIN number in an ATM machine.

We all worry about memory lapses but, in fact, this is a normal part of aging. The good news is that age-related memory loss is not a disease but rather the result of normal changes in the structure and function of the brain that starts when we're around 50.

Why we forget

Here are three of the most common types of problems that interfere with everyday memory function, according to Harvard psychologist Daniel Schacter.

Transience You read the newspaper this morning but can't remember what was on the front page. You heard a fascinating speaker last month but you can't remember her name. Memories weaken over time: those you call on and talk about can remain vivid for decades while others fade or are lost altogether.

Absentmindedness You can't find your car keys (glasses, pen) probably because you didn't focus on where you put

them when you came home. You were thinking of something else and did not encode the information securely.

Blocking The answer to a question is on the tip of your tongue but you can't bring it up/ this is not due to inattention or loss of information. It's because another piece of information overlaps the same "semantic space" in your brain as the information you are searching for. Researchers believe that memory blocks become more common with age and may explain why older people often have difficulty remembering names.

There are two strategies to deal with the problem of forgetfulness: (1) learn how to remember better and (2) develop systems so you won't have to remember so much.

Strategy 1: Remember better

Here are some ways to retain new information that you hear, read and see:

* **Focus.** When someone's talking to you, look at the person and listen closely. Paraphrase what was said: "We'll meet at the café on Main". Minimize interruptions. Finish what you're doing before moving on to something else.



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- * **Repeat new information** to yourself or to another person. This helps you organize it in your own thinking. Teaching someone else a new concept forces you to become fluent with it yourself.
- * **Write yourself a note.** The act of writing helps reinforce it in your memory.
- * **Practice spaced rehearsal.** Rehearsing new information once a day for three days works better than ten times in ten minutes.
- * **Mnemonics.** Use tricks or little hooks to trigger memory. For example: *All Cows Eat Grass* will help you remember bass clef notes in music.
- * **Associations.** When you learn something new, immediately relate it to something you already know.

Strategy 2: Get organized

Organization is the bedrock concept for improving memory performance. Here's what to do:

- * **Use a personal digital assistant (PDA) or notebook to keep track of all the data you can't possibly remember:** phone numbers, e-mail addresses, appointment dates and times, etc. Keep a list of to-do items on your PDA or notebook, and check them regularly.
- * **Record vital information:** emergency and insurance contacts, credit cards, phone numbers of close relatives and friends, your medications, medical history and doctors' names and numbers.
- * **Designate specific places** for keys, cell phone, glasses, wallet, handbag and laptop. Always put them there when you're not using them.
- * **Keep maps of places you visit** often in your car or a designated location at home.

The science of "brain fitness"

Scientists talk about "brain fitness" the same way they talk about cardiovascular fitness. It turns out that essentially every lifestyle factor that benefits our heart also benefits our brain. Genes play a role, of course, but the preservation of optimal brain condition and function also

depends on establishing good habits early in life and sticking with them. These include engaging in cardiovascular, or aerobic, exercise 30-45 minutes a day at least four days a week, going easy on alcohol consumption, getting enough sleep, managing stress and not taking too many over-the-counter medications. At the same time, we need to keep learning—new skills, sports, hobbies—because the use-it-or-lose-it notion definitely applies to the brain. And we all need to maintain a sense of psychological engagement in life. Keeping a vital connection to something that matters to us, whether it's family, friends, faith, pursuit of a goal or idea is one of the most important and least-appreciated factors in optimizing brain health.

Good news about the brain

Age-related changes in the brain can affect memory and related operations in different ways. Our ability to retain and use information like a new phone number or recall when and where a specific event happened may be somewhat reduced. Attending to details and multitasking also become more of a challenge. However, there are many domains of thinking that age does not touch, and these can help us overcome some of the age related difficulties of learning and memory.

Attention The ability to focus and sustain attention is relatively unchanged by aging.

Language We retain a rich knowledge of words and word meanings as we age, and the ingrained rules for how to combine words into meaningful linguistic structures.

Procedural memory Skills for doing things like riding a bicycle or playing the piano remain largely intact over the life span.

Reasoning Age has no effect on our ability to make sense of what we know, to form reasonable judgments and to construct solid arguments.

Willpower With some extra effort to concentrate and learn, older people can recall information as well as a younger person.

Creativity We retain the drive to express ourselves through art, communication or trying new ways of doing things.

Wisdom There's a reason we associate wisdom with advancing age. The capacity to extract meaning from information and knowledge from experience and offer insights remains unscathed—and may even improve with time. ☺

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The Members Page

Community Living West Nipissing



On March 6th 2007 Community Living West Nipissing's EFAP Committee welcomed Raymond Landry of Self Power Consulting (also President of EFAP NORTH Board of Directors) to spend the afternoon and evening with our employees facilitating two 3 hour sessions on "Personal Empowerment for Family/Work Stress Management".

From the feedback received from this staff development seminar, the information Ray shared with the groups was useful and interesting. Consensus was that time constraints made the interactive sessions too short.

Ray's outlook on life is quite tangible as he delivers his message "Honour yourself". Acknowledging our differences and looking for opportunities for harmony help to create positive energy and a quality of work/life that we all strive for.

At each session, an employee present won a draw for the book " Fully Alive from 9 to 5". A coffee pot for two was also drawn at the end of the day.

The day was certainly an experience worth repeating and expanding on.

Paulyne Charron

Community Living West Nipissing EFAP Committee Chair

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EFAP/North is pleased to announce additions to our counselling staff:

Ms. Carrie Becker, SSW, BASW, joined us on April 2, 2007. Her primary role is that of Awareness and Prevention. Her responsibilities will include developing and implementing awareness sessions, seminars and other training opportunities for our member organizations. Carrie will also provide counselling to a limited number of clients, as her primary responsibilities will be educational. Carrie's position will allow us to fulfill our mandate and our commitment to Prevention, which we and our members feel is important to the well-being of our member organizations, their employees and dependent family members.

Mr. Joseph Obomsawin – Carrise, an experienced Marital, Individual and Family Therapist joined our staff on April 5, 2007. Joe's addition will certainly be an asset to us in terms of our ability to respond to the large number of request for couple's counselling, as well as the cultural aspects of counselling our aboriginal members. Joe has a B. Ed., ADED, SSW, and a Native Child and Family Service Worker's Certificate. He is presently completing his thesis in the Master of Social Work program.

Mr. Sheldon Watson, I.C.A.D.C., joined our program on April 11, 2007. Sheldon will provide services to our Sudbury members. Sheldon's main area of expertise is addictions, but has experience and knowledge in dealing with children, youths and families. Sheldon will certainly add to our level of expertise.

Carrie, Joseph and Sheldon will add to our existing team of hard working counsellors, consisting of Laura Heming in our Huntsville office, Terra Nevrean our play therapist, Danielle Marcoux in our North Bay and Sturgeon Falls offices, and last but certainly not least, Lynn Perreault also in our Sturgeon Falls and North Bay office.

To Carrie, Joseph and Sheldon: welcome aboard and here's to a long and successful relationship.

Book of the Month

Children Learn What They Live Parenting to Inspire Values

Authors Dorothy Law Nolte and Rachel Harris

ISBN 0-7611-0919-6



If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn... If children live with acceptance, they learn to love..

Expanding on her universally loved poem, "Children Learn What They Live," which has nourished countless families since its initial publication in 1954, Dorothy Law Nolte offers a simple but powerful guide to parenting - by inspiring values through example. Addressing issues of security, self-worth, tolerance, honesty, fear, respect, fairness, patience, and more, this book of rare common sense will help a new generation of parents find their own parenting wisdom and draw out their child's immense inner resources.

"This book can help you become the parent you have always wanted to be, and raise the kind of children you can always be proud of." -From the foreword by Jack Canfield, co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

