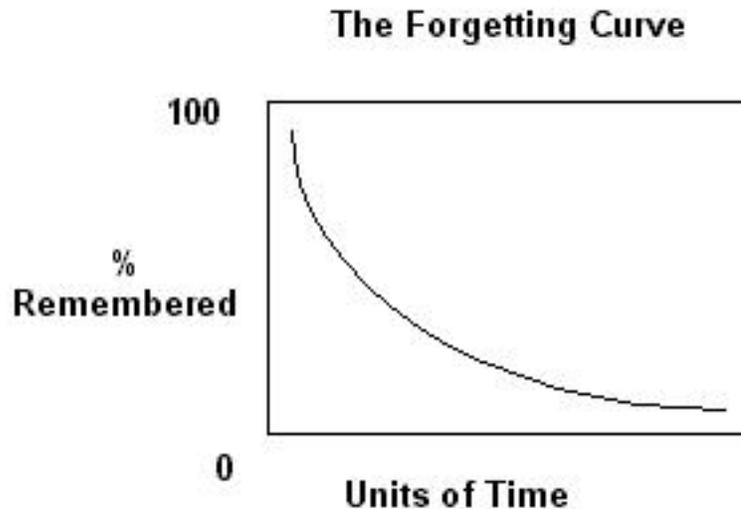


Hold That Thought!

Simple Visualization Exercises to Improve Your Memory

Forgetting:

When it comes to remembering, the first thing that needs to be understood is forgetting. What we learn fades with time. Many psychologists have studied this phenomenon with a variety of experiments and found the following graphic representation to be true of retention:



The above figure illustrates not only that forgetting occurs with the passage of time, but that the greatest amount of forgetting occurs right away and after that initial loss, forgetting slows down. Additional information about our memory can be summarized as follows:

Average readers recall only about half of the ideas presented in a chapter.

Both meaningful and un-meaningful material follows the forgetting curve.

Taking breaks while studying, or spaced memorization, improves long term memory or delayed recall. (Long term memory can be defined as information that is retained after you have established a neural trace or record of that information in the brain. It is stored information that can be retrieved later.)

Un-spaced memorization or continuous concentration with no breaks, is slightly more effective than spaced memorization for immediate recall or short term retention. (Short term memory can be defined as what is remembered as long as you are paying attention.)

For information in short term memory to be transferred to long term memory, repetition and review is needed.

We tend to forget material that conflicts with our beliefs.

We tend to remember material that supports our beliefs.

Forgetting material, for the majority, is greater when we hear it rather than read it.

This is true for an organized talk and even more so for informal listening in social situations.

There are two considerations to take into account when assessing what is remembered and what is forgotten. The first is determining whether you ever really "had it" or not. This is where attention plays a large role. If facts and parts of dialog are not heard in the beginning, or something was not seen, due to distractions or an inability to concentrate and stay focused, then learning may not have taken place to begin with. If the brain did not record the information there is nothing there to retrieve later. This is also true for "incomplete" learning. If no clear image is formed when an idea or concept is presented because of missing details or over-generalization, then learning can not take place. For

something to be remembered our brains must have what is often referred to as a neural trace or a record of the experience. The fact that we do have memories supports the idea that our nervous system has a way of recording information, analogous to information recorded on a disc or hard drive. Just as information can be erased on a disc or hard drive, the brain traces or recorded information can be erased. There are many theories about forgetting, but the general consensus is that each of us has just so much mental storage space at any one given moment. Forgetting is not just due to the passage of time or not using or reviewing the facts. Forgetting can also be caused by the additional accumulation of knowledge and facts. The old saying, "The more you learn, the more you forget." is not far from the truth in some respects. Not only will new learning interfere with remembering old material, but old learning can interfere with new learning. This is commonly demonstrated with experiments in which two groups of individuals are given the same article to read and each tested for recall. One group is allowed to rest before reading the article and one group is given another article to read. Those who rested were able to recall more of the second article than those who were given two articles to read.

Remembering:

There are things we can do to improve our ability to remember, many of which take time, effort and/or practice. Following is a list of strategies that can be practiced to combat forgetfulness and increase retention:

1. Get Motivated

If you have strong enough reasons to remember something, chances are you will. Do your best to create an interest or enthusiasm for what you need to remember.

2. Get Curious

Curiosity can be the springboard for learning quickly and easily. Ask yourself questions to stimulate your curiosity.

3. Be Selective.

Don't try to remember it all.

4. Intend to Remember and Intend to Forget

The intention to remember can help us get a fact right the first time, by slowing us down to ask a question when needed, or making us stop to look at something more carefully, before proceeding. When we "get it right" the first time, we are forming a clear neural brain trace that is there to be retrieved later. Conversely, intending to forget information once it is no longer needed can free up our minds to remember the next new thing we need to remember.

5. Understand the Basics

We interpret and remember much of what we learn in relation to what we already know. When we have a basic framework to work from, it increases our ability to remember new facts.

6. Organize Information in a Meaningful Way

Cluster facts and ideas into categories or "bits" of information that are meaningful to you. We can naturally remember seven, plus or minus two "bits" of information.

7. Recite Information Out Loud

Repetition and review transfers information from short term memory to long term memory.

8. Allow Time to Consolidate Information

Neural traces in the mind need from about 4 or 5 seconds to 15 minutes to "jell" or consolidate

9. Use Distributed Practice

Practice memorizing for short periods of time spread out over the length of time you have to study, instead of studying continuously with out breaks.

10. Relax

A state of tension and nervousness can hinder performance causing test anxiety, writer's block and situations where you just plain "blank out".

11. Visualize

Visualization, using all your senses (including sound, taste, smell and touch) can be a powerful way to improve your memory by laying down a neural trace in the brain. Repetition and practice can serve to enhance the long term memory of the information represented in the visualization.

LET YOUR SENSES RELAX...

and Your Mind Will Follow

Begin by spending as much time as you need to relax and become loose...

You may want to close your eyes... or leave them open.

You may wish to look around... or focus on something in the room.

Take as much time as you would like to do this...

That's right.

As you relax in a way that is comfortable for you,

feel your body resting against the surface that supports you.

Feel your weight fall as you become light...

and your muscles blend with the surface that supports you.

Continue to breathe in a way that is comfortable for you...

Breathing in... and breathing out... fully... totally... relaxed.

Breathing... breathing in... feeling... breathing out...

Notice the temperature of the air... breathing... warmer as you exhale.

Notice how slowly... and easily... and deeply you are able to breathe...

As the awareness of your breath becomes cool warmth...

as you feel the surface that supports you... breathing.

Listen to any sounds that may or may not be present,

hearing what you see over here from there...

seeing what you see... hearing what you hear... and feeling what you feel...

That's right.

Slowly at a pace that is comfortable for you...

Think of a time when you were totally relaxed,

That's right... totally relaxed.

If a time and a place does not flow into your mind, imagine what it would be like...

to be totally relaxed... that's right... totally relaxed and comfortable... breathing.

See what you see, and hear what you hear, as you feel what you feel..

*allowing your breathing to become calmer and deeper...
 in a way that is just right for you...
 That's right... just right for you...
 thinking back to, or imaging a time when you were very relaxed...
 where ever and whenever that may have been... or is.
 Allow the memory to be natural and fluid... allowing it to be... to just be...
 letting it flow over and around you, releasing any tension...
 allowing it to flow...relaxing and comforting...
 letting the memory move all around you... through you... relaxing you...
 you may want to see what you see, and hear what you hear, as you feel what you feel...
 relaxing in a way that is comfortable for you...
 That's right...
 Now double the feeling... that's right... double the feeling...
 letting it flow into the spaces between the spaces...
 around and over... above and below... through...
 gently... evenly... softly... smoothly...
 That's right.
 From here to near and over later... letting it go...
 whenever you are ready, at a pace that is comfortable for you...
 returning to the room relaxed.*

Stacking and Pegging

- To stack and peg, pick 5 rooms that are connected to each other that you could "walk through" and that you are very familiar with. This could be 5 rooms in your house. Next, pick 5 items in each room that you would walk by. Each item you choose should be significantly different from a previous one. Example: you would not choose two chairs, you would choose a desk and a chair, or a chair and a painting on the wall. Choose something that you can easily visualize or "see in your minds eye". These should all be in the order of your walk through.

- Memorize the 5 items in each of the 5 rooms in order of the walk through. You will be surprised at how easy this is, as you are already so familiar with these items. They are already stored in your memory bank for recall in a split second. Keep recalling these 25 items several times a day for several days until you can run through the whole list in seconds.

- Now that you have the list memorized you have the "PEGS" on which to stack what you would like to remember. Choose the items you would like to remember or a key word that will represent what it is you need to remember and "STACK" it on the peg. An example would be the following. I want to remember to stop at the store today to buy apples, drop off my dry cleaning, call my mother, paint my mailbox and go to the registry to renew my driver's license. The 5 things I would stack would be apples, a white starched shirt, a phone, a paint brush and my drivers license.

- Visualize the items you are stacking on the pegs. Make the visualization unusual in any way you can think of that will make it memorable. Make the stacked items a weird color. Example: make the phone hot pink or with black and white spots like a milk cow. Picture several of them or picture them larger than life or very, very small. Give the picture movement and action. Make the picture silly. Be creative.

- Now stack the five items in order on the first five pegs. Walk through the first room, looking at the five items you have stacked on the first five pegs. Run through this visualization several times so the "movie" you are making "gels" or leaves a neural trace to retrieve later. You can use sounds, smells or feelings in your visualization. Example: You can make the cow phone moo. You can make the apples smell like fresh oven baked apples or you can make them sticky to touch. Practice this and have fun with it!

Record Below Five Rooms Each with Five Objects

Room: _____

Room: _____

Room: _____

Room: _____

Room: _____

For more information contact: sandy@sandymaynard.com

*Get a life
Get a coach!*