

Community Brain Injury Program for Children & Youth in British Columbia

Tips for Memory Problems

It is very common to have challenges with memory after a concussion or multiple concussions. Many teens or children will show their parents or teachers that they simply cannot remember recent items. Memory in the brain is stored in several ways: short-term (very recent), and long-term (long ago, the past). Short-term memory is affected a great deal when the brain has had an insult like a concussion.

The child or teen may not be able to remember what they just did or saw or ate, they may not be able to remember the three things you just finished asking them to do, they may not be able to remember what they learned at school today. You need to know that this is relatively normal – it is a big problem, but it is normal in the early days or weeks after a concussion. “Try harder!” is not going to be a helpful strategy. People will need to help the teen or child use specific strategies until their short-term memory is more or less back to normal.

Here are some helpful tips that others have found helpful while your child or teen is trying to learn new things at school, or trying to remember what to do next.

- **REHEARSAL:** repeat or practice what you need to remember
- **IMAGINE:** picture what you need to remember in your head
- **RHYME OR SONG:** make up a rhyme or song to help remember something specific. This is often a very positive exercise, and quite successful.
- **PROBLEM-SOLVING STEPS:** write the steps down, then mentally work through each of the steps and practice what to do in certain situations
- **JOURNALS OR SCHEDULE BOOK:** write down what your child or teen needs to remember in a daytimer, or class scheduler
- **HAND-HELD ELECTRONIC ORGANIZERS:** enter important information so that your teen will have it with them at all times, such as phone numbers to remember
- **ALARM:** program an alarm so that your teen or child can remind themselves of appointments, using a timer or watch or cell phone.
- **TAPE RECORDERS:** record messages to your child or teen, or teach them how to record their own messages, which they can play back later. These messages may be about activities or medications or reminders of any kind.
- Finish one task before starting another. It can be very easy to lose track of the task when your child or teen is trying to get several tasks done at once. Remind them to do only one at a time, so that they don't have to try to remember where they were with the first one.
- Practice memory using card games such as Concentration or Pelman type games where you have to remember pairs of items or a tray of items, etc. Some of these memory games are online, making it more interesting for your teen or child to “play” with therapy goals of memory.
- Give everything you use daily a specific place; then, make sure that everyone puts everything back in its place when they are done with it. This works for toys or books to toothpaste or boots
- Re-word new information into your own words, and keep it simple
- Whenever possible, try to associate new information with personal experiences or with current knowledge or already known information



Additional Tip Sheets are available on *Attention, Tips for Teachers, and Anxiety & Relaxation Techniques.*