

MEMORY AND FORGETFULNESS

Memory is a cognitive capacity to store, retain and recall information that one has experienced or learned via different ways. Difficulties in remembering information and experiences that have been stored can be defined as forgetfulness.

All the experiences and sensory data that we perceive are recorded as a mark in our brain. This mark can be lost unless it is reinforced with a similar stimulus or experience. Rehearsal of the information facilitates learning and remembering.

Memory functions in two ways as short-term and long-term memory. Short-term memory allows us to recall what we need to remember for a short period of time. Information that we need in the future is stored in the long-term memory through repetition and rehearsal.

Our memory stores everything that we learn and recollects this information when needed. Forgetting some information and some events is not a problematic situation by itself. But if we have problems with remembering that disable us to perform our daily routines, we can think of a memory deficit. Some psychiatric and neurological disorders such as dementia and depression as well as internal and external stress factors in one's life can underlie forgetfulness. Intense stress, exposure to substantial relevant/irrelevant stimuli and information, being involved to many different occupations at the same time, attention deficits, disconformities in the work place, and inadequacy or insufficiency of learning and retaining techniques may contribute to difficulties in remembering.

To improve your memory: General health maintenance is essential for good memory functioning. Being mentally active improves your memory as physical exercises build up our muscles. You can find below some tips to improve your memory: Keep learning and exploring new fields of interest. Engaging in new information, skills, and hobbies is a great opportunity to keep our mind active. Learning new languages, memorizing poems, solving mental puzzles enhance your cognitive abilities.

- Lessen activities that keep you passive like watching TV. Physical passivity influences your mental activeness negatively.
- Find ways to manage your stress. An optimal level of stress helps you to concentrate and focus better. However, exposure to high levels of stress for a long time diminishes the ability to retain attention. Increase in the cortisone hormones due to the high level of stress may result in some deficiencies in the parts of brain that are responsible for memory functions and this can lead to forgetfulness.
- Have a good and high quality sleep that will enhance your mental functions positively.
- Exercise regularly. If you can't find time for regular exercise, try to be physically more active during the day and try not to use vehicles for short distances.
- Have a lively social world. Social bonds intensify mental activity and release psychic discomfort. Make more time to spend with your friends, family and relatives.
- Take care of your physical health. Some physical illness and medication may influence mental functions negatively. If necessary, consult a physician for appropriate treatment. Do not use any medication without your physician's prescription. Some pills that came out to be natural or harmless may damage your neurons.
- Control your alcohol consumption. Alcohol abuse can have a dramatic impact on cognitive abilities and may cause memory loss.

To retain information: The way you store and encode information can determine the strength of your memory. You can see below some learning tips to retain and remember information more effectively.

- Focusing helps to retain information in the long run and remember it more accurately. In order to focus, try to eliminate the distracting stimuli around.
- Finding certain associations with information that you try to learn facilitates to remember them back. For example, when you associate a phone number with your birth date, it may become easier to recall it.
- Determine and differentiate the essential material to focus on. Memorizing unnecessary information makes it harder to remember what is essential.
- Information that calls more upon our senses is learned and remembered more easily. For example, information learned with a related visual aid may be retained in the memory more permanently and recalled more easily.
- Use catchy imagination related to the information you learn. You can attribute some colors and images to the information you learn and it makes you remember more accurately.
- Formalize the information as concretely as possible.
- Build connections between information and your previous knowledge, such as a book you have already read, a person you have known. You may easily remember through your associations.

- Rehearsal of what you have learned has a miraculous effect on learning and remembering. Repeating and reviewing your knowledge after a while you have studied and relearning what you have forgotten provide a more permanent learning.
- Think positively. While learning watch your self-talk. Use positive statements as "I learn, I remember, I understand" instead of negative phrases such as "I won't remember this, I will forget."
- If you are not sure of the causes of your memory loss, if your forgetfulness affects your daily functioning negatively and if your memory problems persist although you have tried all the recommendations above, you may consult a professional.

For More Information

Psychological Counselling Department

(The services are available only to the students and staff of İstanbul Bilgi University.)

e-mail: psycounselling@bilgi.edu.tr

Kustepe Campus

Tel: 0212 311 63 61/ 6470 / 6252

Dolapdere Campus

Tel: 0212 311 5212

santralistanbul

Tel: 0212 311 7671
