5 Science-Proven Ways to Improve Your Memory

From people’s names to sales data, there is a lot of information entrepreneurs need to be able to remember at any given moment. Here’s how to improve your memory and retain more information.

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Presented by
Memory creation and management is a complex process where the human brain collects, stores and recalls information that we need for various tasks. Yet these memories also play a more human role by helping you recognize and remember important people and special occasions.

Some cognitive conditions, such as dementia, Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s, rob people of the brain’s memory function. Yet even without these terrible diseases, busy entrepreneurs can risk losing stored memories and the ability to form and retain new ones. Our hectic lifestyles often mean little sleep which can hurt memory function.

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Rather than let our ability to store and recall memories become dulled, we can take a proactive approach. Fortunately, science gives us hope with ways to sharpen this essential neurological tool. Here are five you should incorporate into your routine.

1. Play video games and brain-training apps

This scientific recommendation may make you laugh, especially if your parents told you to stop playing so many video games when you were younger. But, a 2017 study in the journal Behavioral Brain Research concluded that a wide range of video games actually improve the functioning of various memory-associated regions in the brain. The research cited improvements in areas like semantic memory, which involves your overall ability to recall knowledge. While you don't want to spend hours and hours every day playing video games if you're trying to run a company, it's a good regular pastime to exercise your brain.

If you aren't a fan of video games, consider instead brain-training and memory apps do play with when you have a break or downtime. Studies show they help prevent cognitive decline and may even result in a lower risk of dementia. Examples of potentially helpful brain training apps include Lumosity, CogniFit, BrainFitness and Clockwork Brain. You can also try crossword, find-a-word and picture search apps.

2. Devise mnemonics to aid in recall

Mnemonic devices do more than help you recall information. They may actually improve your brain.

In fact, a 2017 research article in Neuron magazine revealed that mnemonic training activities reshape the brain on a physical level. They do this by generating new cognitive network connections that then improve memory function. There is a wide range of mnemonic activities to choose from so you can find one or more that appeal to your personal or business interests.

Related: 7 Strategies You Can Use to Improve Your Memory

You can create or adopt mnemonics that incorporate music, words, names, notes and rhymes. For example, you can create a mnemonic using the first letter of each word in a list of items you need to remember at work, then giving it the name of a person or thing.

So, if you wanted to remember the colors of the spectrum in a certain order– **R**ed, **O**range, **Y**ellow, **G**reen, **B**lue, **I**ndigo, **V**iolet– you could use the name ROY G. BIV.

You can create or adapt mnemonics for just about anything, including a list of employees or projects, competitors or simply your grocery list. In creating and practicing mnemonics, you'll actually strengthen your mental ability to form, retain and recall important knowledge and facts that you need to stay sharp in business.

3. Exercise regularly

While mental exercise definitely helps improve your memory skills, physical exercise is also key. Research in Trends in Cognitive Sciences found that a sedentary lifestyle seemed to promote memory loss while physical activity stimulated memory retention and improvement.

Several research studies have established that regular physical exercise benefits cognitive skills including memory. The findings include improvements in brain function that come from exercise duration and intensity, leading to a more balanced hormonal function while also stimulating neurochemical changes that keep the brain sharp.

Related: 6 Habits To Improve Your Memory and Boost Your Brain Health

Create a weekly exercise regimen that fits your work schedule and appeals to your preference or skill level. Whether it's

running, basketball, walking or hiking, swimming or basketball, find something you enjoy and that may involve others, even employees or colleagues. This may help encourage you to stick to your schedule. Alternatively, hire a personal trainer or join a gym.

4. Reduce stress levels

Research has found that some people diagnosed with dementia actually didn’t have it at all. Rather, intense and persistent stress had impaired their memory and other cognitive skills.

Stress can impact a wide range of memory functions, including short-term memory and autobiographical memory. Cortisol, a stress hormone, can flood the brain’s memory banks and diminish recall and recognition, according to recent research.

By incorporating mindfulness-based stress reduction methods, research participants were able to regain and even improve memory function. These methods include meditation, mindful thinking, reflection and journaling. Find other ways to reduce stress by delegating when feeling overwhelmed, avoiding negative situations and people and minimizing risky situations.

5. Eat your vegetables (and fruit)

A Harvard Medical School study concluded that men may improve their memory by eating more servings of vegetables and fruit. The extensive study included close to 28,000 men in their early 50s who answered questions every four years for two decades. The questions concerned (among other lifestyle factors) how many servings of vegetables, fruit and other types of foods they ate daily.

The participants also took tests that gauged their thinking and memory skills in the four years prior to the end of the

study. By the time the study finished, the men were in their early 70s.

The men who ate six servings of vegetables and fruit each day didn’t develop poor thinking skills as often as those who ate two servings or less each day. Each serving represented either a cup of whole fruit or raw vegetables, half a cup of fruit juice, or two cups of leafy green vegetables.

Scientists involved in this research believed the antioxidants and bioactive substances, which included Vitamins A, B, C, and E as well as carotenoids, flavonoids, and polyphenols, helped to lower oxidative stress in the brain. This stress can cause age-related memory loss.

A comprehensive plan to improve your memory

So often, strategic approaches suggest starting with one or two tactics at a time rather than doing them all. In this case, you should try and adopt as many proven ways listed here to sharpen your memory. Once lost, you won’t get those memories back, so start now to be cognitively fit no matter what your age.

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