

An Elephant Brain



**Empowering
Your
Memory**

Who Needs a Good Memory?

or, how to combat the trend in our lazy thinking ...



In an age of instant access online to encyclopaedic knowledge on just about any subject, one might question why anyone would need a good memory today; but the reality is, brain health is perhaps the most important asset we can have and need to hang on to as human beings.

Online access can make us lazy for holding onto information, but without true stimulation throughout life, there is the danger of just letting ourselves go; and just like the muscle adage "use it or lose it" this reality can creep up on us and hit hard.

Beyond simple brain health, demonstrated signs of a good memory in business and socially are what sets us apart. So, there are indeed many reasons to maintain a good memory, including...

Learning and Education: Memory plays a vital role in the learning process. It allows us to acquire, store, and recall information, which is crucial for academic success. Whether it's remembering facts, concepts, or procedures, a strong memory helps us grasp new and build upon existing knowledge.

Problem Solving: A good memory enhances our ability to solve problems effectively. By recalling past experiences, lessons learned, and relevant information, we can apply this knowledge to analyse and solve complex problems. Memory helps us identify patterns, make connections and generate creative solutions based on past successes or failures.

Personal Relationships: Memory is essential for building and maintaining personal relationships. Remembering names, faces, and details about others shows that we care and value them. It allows us to recall shared experiences, stories, and conversations, deepening our connections and fostering meaningful relationships.

Career Advancement: In the realms of any professional, a good memory can be a significant asset. Remembering important details, deadlines, and instructions improves productivity and demonstrates reliability. It enables us to recall relevant information during meetings, presentations, and negotiations, enhancing our professional credibility and effectiveness.

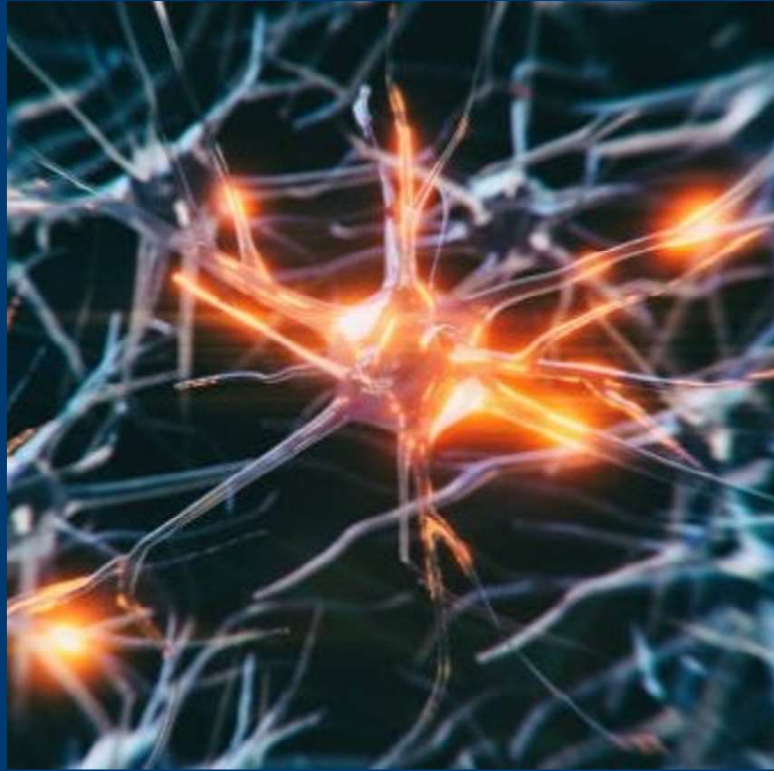
Adaptability and Decision Making: Memory helps us make informed decisions and adapt to new situations. By drawing on our past experiences and knowledge, we can evaluate options, anticipate potential outcomes, and make choices that are informed by our past successes or failures. Memory provides a mental framework that allows us to navigate unfamiliar circumstances more effectively.

Personal Development: Memory is closely linked to self-awareness and personal growth. By reflecting on past experiences and recalling lessons learned, we can identify our strengths and weaknesses, set goals, and make improvements. Memory enables us to learn from our mistakes, build on our achievements, and continually evolve as individuals.

Mental Well-being: A good memory can contribute to mental well-being. It allows us to reminisce about positive experiences, recall cherished memories, and relive joyful moments. Memory also plays a crucial role in maintaining our identity and sense of self, which is vital for overall psychological health.

Of course, it's important to note that memory abilities can vary among individuals. Various factors such as age, health and genetics can influence memory performance. However, adopting memory-enhancing techniques, getting sufficient sleep, and leading a healthy lifestyle, can help improve memory function.

Our role at An Elephant Brain is to turn the pain of a poor memory into joy of enhanced brain power through memory training. Anyone can indeed improve their life via enhanced memory by introducing simple changes to encoding and recall techniques. That's what we do... it's all we do.



Memory The Science

The Science of Memory

how brain training taps into the “magic”...



Have you ever wondered about the intricate workings of your memory... or how one could go about training the brain to better remember things? Taking a sneak peek here, we look at the fascinating world of memory improvement and explore the cognitive processes and brain functions that play a vital role in memory formation, retention and recall...

Encoding, The First Step: When we experience something new, like learning a new fact or meeting someone, our brain goes into action. This initial process is encoding... during this, information is transformed into a neural code that can be stored and retrieved later. The more attention and focus we give to the information, the more effectively it gets encoded.

Storage, Creating Neural Pathways: Once information is encoded, it moves to the storage stage... like files in a library. Different types of memories are stored in different parts of the brain. Short-term memories hang out in the prefrontal cortex, while long-term memories find their place in the hippocampus and other areas.

Retrieval, Unearthing Memories: Recall is the main act! The whole point of training is to replace memory struggles with instant recall, be it a name, shop item, report content... or other data.

This retrieval process involves reactivating the neural pathways created during encoding. The more often you retrieve a memory, the stronger the associated neural connections become.

So how neurologically are these techniques designed to boost your brain's capacity to encode, store, and retrieve information? Here's just a little summary...

Visualization and Association: By creating vivid mental images to connecting new information with existing knowledge stimulates multiple areas of the brain, strengthening neural connections, making it easier to retrieve memories later.

Chunking and Spacing: Breaking down complex information into smaller chunks and spacing out learning and practice sessions over time taps into your brain's natural ability to absorb and retain knowledge.

Sleep and Memory: During sleep, your brain is working to solidify the memories you've formed throughout the day as it supports the transfer of information from short-term to long-term memory.

Brain-Boosting Lifestyle: Regular exercise, a balanced diet and stress reduction techniques all contribute to optimal brain health... and a healthy brain is better equipped for memory retention and retrieval.

In short, the whole concept of training is to understand and master the power of memory. An Elephant Brain provides all the tools needed... and don't worry about the photo... no probes or implants are needed! Happy learning and remembering!!

Power of the Mind's Eye

and learning how to effectively harness it!



The human brain is able to process images many thousands of times faster than the written paragraph. This is the power of the "mind's eye" which refers to the mental ability to visualize images or scenes in one's mind, even in the absence of actual sensory input. It's essentially your mind's capacity to create and manipulate visual imagery, almost like you're "seeing" things in your imagination, as concept also known as "mental imagery" or "visual imagination".

Harnessing the mind's eye is central to An Elephant Brain memory improvement training. The power of the "mind's eye" lies in its ability to simulate experiences, memories, and concepts internally. When you imagine something using your mind's eye, you can conjure up mental pictures of places, people, objects, scenarios, and even abstract ideas. This mental imagery can be incredibly vivid, and it can evoke emotions and sensations similar to those experienced when interacting with the actual physical world.

Similarly, the phrase "a picture paints a thousand words" underscores the idea that visual information can convey complex ideas far more efficiently than words alone. While words are certainly a powerful means of communication, visuals often capture the essence of a situation or concept quickly and more directly. A single image can communicate a wealth of information and evoke emotional responses that might require a lengthy explanation if conveyed solely through words.

The concepts of "mind's eye" and "a picture paints a thousand words" are recognised today in the field of cognitive psychology as "Picture Superiority Effect - PSE" where people tend to remember pictures or images more effectively than words or text. The terms are interconnected in the sense they emphasize the efficiency and richness of visual representation. When you use your mind's eye to visualize, you're essentially creating mental pictures that can be just as evocative and detailed as real images. This visualization ability enables you to "see" concepts, stories, and ideas unfold in your mind, much like a series of pictures. It's a tool that can aid in memory recall, creative thinking, and overall cognitive processing.

The secret to establishing a great memory is to formalise these phenomena into a "system", something which is consistent, reliable and importantly, structured so as under our control.

Throughout our training programs at An Elephant Brain the common denominators are thus:

Visualisation: mental imaging, creating pseudo or false mind pictures

Association: references to help transfer from working memory into long-term memory

Exaggeration: the more exaggerated the image, the easier the recall

These three simple elements cover a huge scope but when combined into a system of procedures developed and deployed over many decades are key to convert an average memory into great.

Now, of course, we're not talking about turning everyone into geniuses here or improving IQ scores per se; good memory is not simply interchanged with intellect or intelligence. Many other factors such as interest and how any subject is delivered will influence the extent of how one learns. But what we are talking about is potentially life-changing skills and tools that can easily be adopted and adapted to suit individual needs, where with a little practice, can turn the fantasy of instant recall into reality.

A case in point, would not claim to be a genius... but despite brain trauma prior to university, once I adapted these principles, I sailed through university and gained a first-class honours degree, where fellow students much smarter and working harder than myself received lower degrees. And beyond university, I refined and went on to apply this system through my whole professional career.

The beauty of An Elephant Brain memory training, we have designed courses to suit education, business and in health, can work with individuals in private or in reasonable sized groups where the cost of this life-changing tool can be as low as a fast-food breakfast meal per person. And compared to learning and mastering the piano or kung fu, the time to become a master here is miniscule.

In our world and in the world of the mind's eye... if you have a mind to improve your memory, you're half way there already.

Picture Superiority Effect

and it's relationship to memory training...



The Picture Superiority Effect - or PSE refers to the phenomenon in cognitive psychology where people tend to remember pictures or images more effectively than words or text. This effect has been widely studied and is rooted in the way our brains process and store information. Most will understand this as a technical term for “a picture paints a thousand words” where images are often indeed more vivid, engaging and distinctive compared to a string of written words.

Memory training programs, when used in education, in particular the unique training as offered by An Elephant Brain, leverage the picture superiority effect to enhance learning and retention among students. Here's how the picture superiority effect can help memory training programs:

Enhanced Encoding: When students are exposed to visual information, such as diagrams, charts, or images, their brains engage in deeper processing. Visual information is often processed in parallel with verbal information, leading to more robust encoding in memory. Memory training programs incorporate visual elements to help students better understand and retain complex concepts.

Dual Coding: The picture superiority effect is closely related to "dual coding theory" where combining verbal and visual information enhances memory. Phonetics and visualisation certainly combine beautifully in our world for effect... indeed, they are central to the key list structure taught by An Elephant Brain. By presenting information both verbally and visually, memory training programs tap into multiple cognitive channels, increasing the likelihood of successful encoding and later retrieval.

Increased Engagement: Visual stimuli are inherently attention-grabbing and engaging. Memory training programs use images, videos, infographics and other visual materials to capture students' attention and maintain their interest in the learning process. This engagement can lead to better focus and retention of information. Our strategy often greatly exaggerates via "silly mental imaging" to facilitate easier encode and recall functions.

Association and Contextualization: Visual cues help students associate information with specific images, which aids in forming meaningful connections. Memory training programs can use visual cues to create mental associations and contextual frameworks that facilitate the recall of information during exams or assignments. This is why we employ a "key list" system... where short term memory goals are forever aided by long term references.

Varied Learning Styles: Students have diverse learning styles and some individuals are visual learners who benefit significantly from visual stimuli. Incorporating images and diagrams in memory training programs caters to these learners, helping them understand and remember the material more effectively. After one understands the nature of building a key list, any individual can create their own and tailor to their own environment.

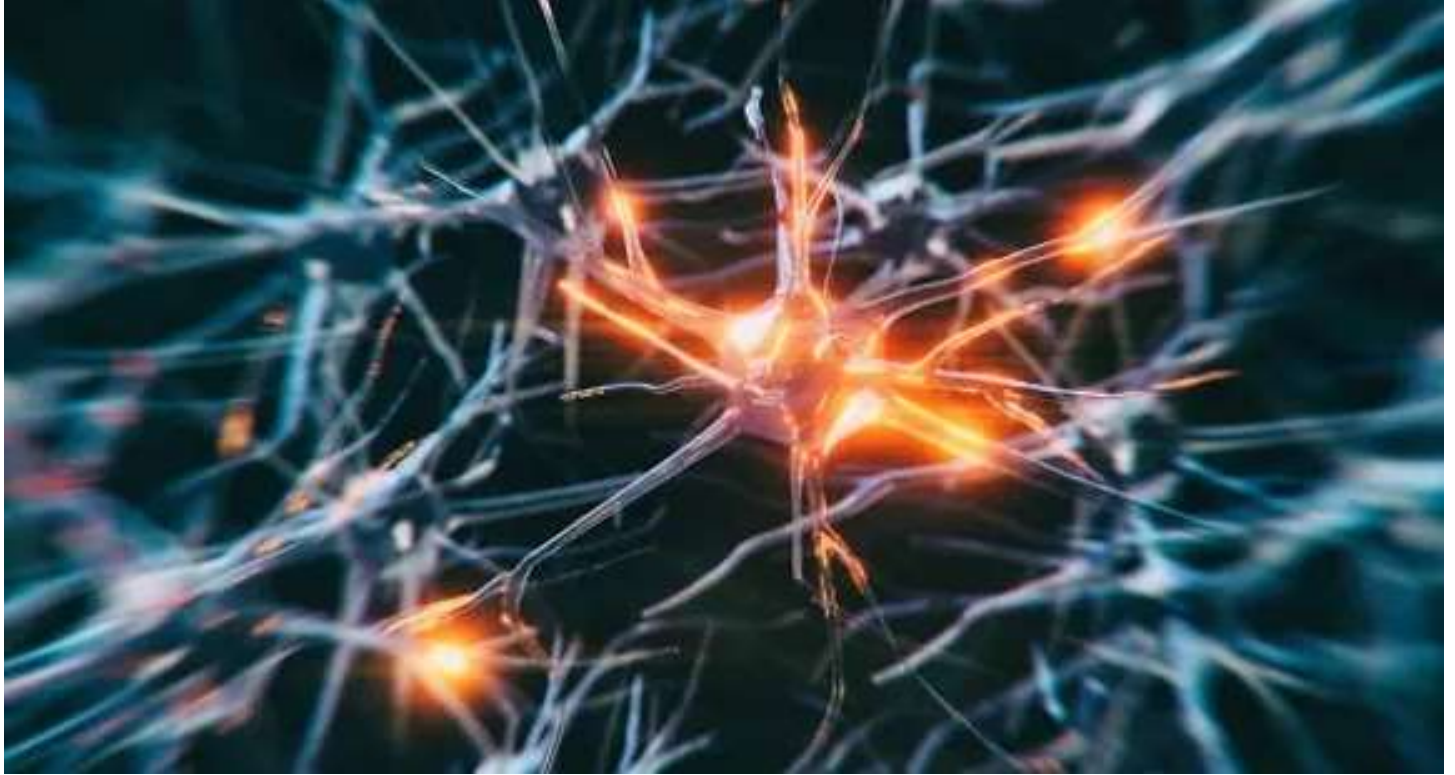
Emotional Impact: Visual content can evoke emotions and stimulate emotional memory. Memory training programs that use emotionally resonant images can help students establish a stronger and more enduring connection with the material, leading to improved retention over time. A simple example when forming key lists is the ability to switch between inanimate and highly personal triggers... which comes down to personal choice.

Long-Term Retention: Naturally one doesn't care too much about saving a shopping list long term as that may be changed many times over and over. The beauty of Picture Superiority Effect is that it aids improvement in long-term memory in the first instance... from the very earliest days of employing the system, many of the triggers will stay with us for life. Memory training leverages this effect to help students remember key concepts, facts and principles even after significant time has passed.

Summing up, picture superiority effect is a valuable tool in memory training programs; it's not a one-size-fits-all solution... as logic also plays its part. Effective educational strategies often involve a combination of various techniques, including visual aids, active learning, repetition and personalized approaches that cater to individual preferences. That said, PSE is central to memory training success.

What is Neuroplasticity?

and how does it help in memory training?



Neuroplasticity, also known as brain plasticity or neural plasticity, refers to the brain's remarkable ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life. It involves the brain's capacity to adapt, change its structure, and adjust its functioning in response to learning, experience, and environmental influences. Neuroplasticity occurs at various levels within the brain:

Synaptic Plasticity: This refers to the strengthening or weakening of the connections (synapses) between neurons. Long-term potentiation (LTP) and long-term depression (LTD) are two processes that play a role in synaptic plasticity, enabling the strengthening or weakening of connections based on the frequency and timing of neuron firing.

Structural Plasticity: This involves physical changes in the brain's structure, such as the growth of new dendritic spines (small protrusions on neurons) or the pruning of unused synapses. It allows the brain to adapt to new experiences and learning.

Functional Plasticity: This type of plasticity allows different parts of the brain to take over functions that were previously carried out by damaged or inactive regions. For example, after a brain injury, other areas of the brain might take on the tasks that the damaged area once performed.

Cross-modal Plasticity: This refers to the brain's ability to compensate for sensory deficits by reallocating resources from one sensory modality to another. For example, in individuals who are blind, the brain's visual cortex can become more active in processing auditory or tactile information.

In the context of memory training, neuroplasticity plays a crucial role. By engaging in specific cognitive activities, individuals can harness the brain's plasticity to enhance memory function. Memory training exercises and techniques can stimulate the formation of new synaptic connections, strengthen existing connections, and improve the overall efficiency of memory-related neural pathways, such as:

Learning New Information: When you learn new facts, concepts, or skills, your brain forms new connections between neurons. Repeated exposure and practice reinforce these connections, making the information easier to recall in the future.

Practice and Repetition: Repeatedly practicing and revisiting information strengthens the synaptic connections involved in memory storage. This process, known as spaced repetition, helps solidify memories over time.

Variety and Challenge: Engaging in a variety of memory tasks and challenges forces your brain to adapt and form new connections. Trying new learning methods and exposing yourself to novel experiences can stimulate different areas of the brain, enhancing memory abilities.

Physical Exercise and Healthy Lifestyle: Regular physical exercise, a balanced diet, proper sleep, and stress management can also promote neuroplasticity and support memory function.

Mindfulness and Meditation: Mindfulness practices can lead to changes in brain structure and function, influencing memory and cognitive abilities. These practices may enhance attention, focus, and memory retrieval.

Remember, that while neuroplasticity allows for improvements in memory function, individual results may vary. Consistency, motivation, and choosing memory training techniques that suit your learning style are important factors in achieving successful memory enhancement through neuroplasticity. It's an obvious statement of course to just say the brain is a complex thing, but knowing this as a starting point helps us to appreciate the worth of a systemised approach to memory training for maximum effect.



Memory in Health

The Elderly Brain Reshaped

and “training-induced” structural changes...



There are so many variables when it comes to learning, comprehension and memory. As we enter into retirement, the workplace minute-by-minute tasks and outcomes focus is replaced for many by patterns of routine and sameness, ultimately challenging our brains less. And there are areas of the brain which shrink as we get older and so our ability to remember begins to drop off noticeably from our 50s or 60s onwards as neurogenesis slows down.

The good news is, in the last two decades research around the world has revealed many positive impacts of physical and mental exercise on brain health as we age. Research has in fact helped to dispel the long-held view that our brains are inevitably in decline as we age. For instance, a 2003 University of Regensburg study, published in the science journal "Nature" in January 2004, examined changes in the brain structure of individuals who learned how to juggle.

In this study, a small group of 24 non-juggling individuals, mostly female with a median age of 22, was split into two groups where one group was tasked with learning how to juggle; the three-month target was to be able to juggle continuously with three balls for 60 seconds. Brain scans were conducted before and after the three-month period for both groups with the key observations:

Increases in grey matter volume in brain regions associated with visual and motor coordination was observed in each of the jugglers, but remained the same in the control, non-juggling group

Brain scans held at the six-month mark showed expansions to recede, although not completely, when participants stopped juggling in the following three months

The indications were of the human brain's remarkable plasticity in relation to new challenges and learning new things

In a subsequent study in 2008, a larger group size of 93, around two-thirds male participants, went through essentially the same trial routine. But this time the *median age was 60* with the view to investigate whether similar brain characteristics might be observed in more elderly subjects.

It should be noted that while 100% of the original, younger trial subjected learning to juggle achieved that task, in the case of the elderly subjects' trial, not all in the juggling group were able to complete the 60s challenge*. But, again as per the earlier study, key findings included;

Similar increases in grey matter volume were observed in the same brain in the new juggling group, but remained the same in the control, non-juggling group

*Despite the range of successes**, there was little observed difference in brain expansion with the new jugglers, implying the learning more than the success more influential

The six-month tests reveal a reversal in the brain expansion but not completely to the original, demonstrating similar plasticity in brains of 40 years more senior

Given that cortical plasticity of the human brain is, not only on a functional but also on a structural level, preserved even in later years, the data supports a conclusion about the potential value of exercise with a brain-plasticity-based training program offering promise of an improvement of the operational capabilities of aging adults via learning something new. In effect and anecdotally, but increasingly supported by peer reviewed research, there is every indication that learning something new offers enormous potential to preserve a healthy brain and promote longevity.

Of course, we don't all need to learn to juggle - many of us struggle to do that with our finances - but whatever we do, I can state from personal experiences with learning Rubik's cube and more recently starting with Mandarin, "an old dog really can learn new tricks!"

Post-Stroke Memory Loss

& How Memory Training Offers Huge Hope...



Stroke and transient ischemic attacks (TIAs), commonly referred to as "mini-strokes," are medical emergencies that can have significant and long-lasting effects on a person's health and quality of life.

One of the more distressing consequences of increasing incidences of stroke or TIA is short-term memory loss, which can profoundly impact daily functioning and overall well-being. However, emerging research has shown that memory training can provide a much-needed glimmer of hope for those grappling with memory deficits.

Short-term memory loss is a common cognitive impairment that occurs after a stroke or TIA. Unlike long-term memory, which stores information for an extended period, short-term memory is responsible for holding and processing information temporarily. Individuals experiencing short-term memory loss might find it difficult to remember recent events, conversations, or even carry out tasks that involve multiple steps. This can lead to frustration, confusion, and a sense of isolation as the affected individuals struggle to keep up with their daily routines.

The toll of short-term memory loss on a person's life cannot be underestimated. Simple activities like cooking, managing medications, or making plans become complex challenges. Relationships with family and friends might suffer due to the perceived disinterest or inability to engage in conversations. Moreover, the loss of independence can lead to anxiety and depression, exacerbating the already challenging situation.

While the effects of short-term memory loss can be devastating, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that memory training can significantly improve cognitive function in stroke and TIA survivors. Memory training involves a range of exercises and techniques designed to enhance memory performance and cognitive abilities. These interventions focus on strengthening neural pathways, improving attention, and optimizing information processing.

Cognitive Rehabilitation: Cognitive rehabilitation programs are tailored to individual needs and can involve various exercises to stimulate memory and other cognitive functions. These exercises might include memory games, attention-building tasks, and problem-solving activities.

Mindfulness and Meditation: Mindfulness practices and meditation techniques have shown promise in improving memory and attention. By promoting relaxation and reducing stress, these practices can indirectly contribute to enhanced cognitive function.

Lifestyle Modifications: Lifestyle changes such as maintaining a healthy diet, regular exercise, and adequate sleep can also positively influence cognitive abilities. Physical activity, for instance, has been linked to improved memory and brain health.

Technology-Assisted Training: With the rise of digital tools, memory training apps and online platforms offer accessible and engaging ways to challenge and improve memory.

Recovering from short-term memory loss after a stroke or TIA is a gradual process that requires patience and persistence. While memory training holds promise, it's important to remember that results can vary based on factors like the severity of the stroke, the individual's overall health, and the commitment to training. A comprehensive approach, combining memory training with medical treatment and support from healthcare professionals and loved ones, is crucial for achieving the best outcomes.

The good news is, ANYONE at any stage in life can adopt techniques to enhance their memory. So, while the misery of short-term memory loss after a stroke or TIA is a formidable challenge, advances in memory training offer hope and huge potential for improvement.

As a TIA sufferer myself this year, I can attest to this... engaging in memory-enhancing exercises, adopting a healthy lifestyle, and seeking professional guidance, all help one to embark on a journey towards recovery, rebuilding cognitive abilities, and regaining a sense of control and normalcy in life... This is what An Elephant Brain is all about.

Memory Training for Seniors

and unleashing your brain power at any age!



Did you know memory training isn't just for the young? Seniors too can boost mental agility, keeping the mind sharp and ready for new challenges by engaging in memory training exercises.

Remembering what matters most is key. Imagine seeing a cyclist on a penny farthing bicycle in a golden clown outfit while juggling bowling balls, now that would be quite a sight and one easy to remember. Memory training equips you with the tools so that even the most mundane shopping list is easy to recall.

Training the brain to stay sharp remember anything we choose to is one of the best things we can do for our brains as we get on in years. Believe me I know... it worked for me and it can work for you!

Stretching your brain to the limit helps maintain or even grow your mental abilities... and staying vibrant and engaging makes it fun to be alive. Of course, memory training isn't just about shopping lists, names and dates, it's about cognitive flexibility, problem-solving and staying in touch with those around you, especially friends and family.

Socially, when starting out on your new memory journey, you're not on your own... it's not about being solo at this stage; learning in small interactive group sessions, apart from helping each other learn these new memory techniques, is a lot of fun. It helps everyone enhance social interactions and form new friendships while reinforcing old ones. This enriches your conversations and creates stronger ties.

Let's face it, your mental health matters as much as your physical wellbeing for a quality life. The beauty of memory training activities for seniors... there's no boss or corporate deadline... you're answerable to only yourself; there's nothing like a mental challenge to keep your mind young.

Going to the supermarket no longer needs to be a chore, but an adventure. I've seen tears of delight in retirees who previously would struggle with a few items on a written list... who are now amazed after training how they can know every item on a list, long or short, without reading from it. Imagine that... and I know some already challenging their grandkids on who can remember more!

As one who knows the pleasure of the memory improvement journey, I can only encourage people to embrace a new challenge... why not try brightening your future by honing your memory skills. As one new client stated, this is the time to explore new hobbies, learn fresh skills and adapt to the changing world... not to sit back with fading old memories.

Anyone can join us on these memory-boosting journeys; in a group or club or with a bunch of friends they can just go for it... and for everyone it will be highly memorable!

Essential Memory Exercises

incorporating fun into your regular routine...



We live in a world filled with information overload, whilst at the same time its mostly instantaneous access via technology has an effect of creating lazy thinkers; so a sharp memory today is still a standout asset. Students aiming to excel in exams, professionals looking to boost productivity or career prospects, or anyone simply interested in maintaining or improving cognitive health... incorporating memory exercises into your daily routine can make a huge and positive difference in life. A simple set of actionable steps and exercises to help kickstart your journey toward memory improvement include: .

Mindful Observation: Practice mindful observation to improve your attention to detail and strengthen your memory recall. *Actionable Step:* Choose an everyday object, like a pen, and observe it closely for a minute. Note its colour, texture, and any unique features. Imagine having to describe it.

Memory Journaling: Keeping a memory journal can stimulate your brain's ability to remember events and thoughts. *Actionable Step:* Dedicate a few minutes each day to jot down notable experiences, observations, or even dreams. Describe the details as vividly as possible.

Visualization Techniques: Visualizing concepts can enhance memory retention by creating strong mental associations. *This is actually at the core of memory training.* *Actionable Step:* Before going to bed, visualize a peaceful, serene place you'd like to visit. Imagine the sounds, smells, and sensations to make it more realistic.

Chunking Information: Chunking involves breaking information into smaller, manageable groups... so, just like we do with our 10-digit mobile phone number. *Actionable Step:* If you need to remember, say, an 11-digit ABN or a 16-digit credit card number, simply grouping it into chunks like (123) (456) (7890) etc helps. Of course, to us that becomes mind images!

Storytelling for Learning: Transform facts into stories to make them more memorable, such as a news item or a familiar event; how would you describe it. *Actionable Step:* Choose a historical event or a concept you want to remember. Craft a short, imaginative story that incorporates the key elements.

Regular Exercise: Physical activity enhances blood flow to the brain and muscle contractions help promote new neural growth activity for cognitive health. *Actionable Step:* Dedicate 30 minutes to brisk walking, jogging, or any physical activity you enjoy, three times a week... more is better, but don't overdo it!

Healthy Diet: Certain foods support brain health and memory function... going through the fridge and pantry help focus on what you could add to or cut out of your diet. *Actionable Step:* Incorporate "brain foods" like blueberries, fatty fish, nuts, and dark leafy greens into your diet... but make sure to follow proper health guidelines.

Memory Games and Apps: Engage in memory-boosting games and apps designed to challenge your brain... crosswords, puzzles and especially combines spacial and physical challenges such as Rubik. *Actionable Step:* Download a memory-training app and spend 10-15 minutes daily playing memory-focused games; simple crosswords and Rubik are great pastimes.

Social Interaction: Engaging with others stimulates your brain and keeps your memory active... meeting new people and getting out of the house are huge positives. *Actionable Step:* Plan regular social activities, whether it's a coffee date with a friend, joining a club, or participating in community events.

All of these exercises are simple entries into seriously looking out for your brain. Enhancing your memory is an achievable goal with consistent effort and the right **techniques such as learning new ways to encode and recall information; and this is where simple and very affordable **programs offered by An Elephant Brain have the potential to literally change your life.

Rubik's Cube and Brain Health

and how it helped save me after a TIA/mini-stroke...



Rubik's Cube is a three-dimensional mechanical puzzle that has gained huge worldwide popularity since its emergence in the late 1970's. While it may seem like a simple toy, solving a Rubik's Cube can provide several benefits for brain health and cognitive development.

OK, we're not talking about taking on world champion "Cubers" to solve in three seconds! No, we're here to show just some of the benefits to be gained physically and mentally from taking on this cubic challenge.

Just some of the ways in which the Rubik's Cube can be beneficial include:

Problem-solving skills: Solving a Rubik's Cube requires analytical thinking, strategic planning, and problem-solving abilities.

Spatial awareness and visualization: Manipulating the cube involves understanding spatial relationships and visualizing the different moves required to reach the desired outcome.

Memory and concentration: Remembering algorithms, patterns, and sequences of moves is crucial for solving the Rubik's Cube efficiently.

Fine motor skills: Manipulating the cube's small, movable parts requires precise finger movements, coordination, and dexterity.

Patience and perseverance: Solving the Rubik's Cube can be a challenging and time-consuming task, especially for beginners.

Stress relief: Engaging in activities that require focus and concentration, such as solving a Rubik's Cube, can act as a form of mindfulness and relaxation.

Brain plasticity: *The Rubik's Cube stimulates the brain and encourages neuroplasticity, which is the brain's ability to reorganize and form new neural connections...even as we age.*

Anyone reading my story on the About page of this website will see how Rubik helped with my own stroke recovery program! Having experienced the misery of brain fog and confusion following my mini-stroke in February this year, I can attest to the benefits of this daily mental challenge.

In March, I picked up a Rubik's cube for the first time ever. After following various YouTube video tips, finding the first two "layers" simple enough, I went on to adapt my own "mind's eye" picture techniques to simplify remembering the top corner and edge "end-algorithms" for easier completion.

I personally like to solve daily, sometimes to time the complete solution but mostly to check the various patterns and forms to visually appreciate the variances and solving shortcuts.

One of the more satisfying parts of An Elephant Brain training courses is seeing the delight in being engaged in this challenge, along with, of course, mastering listing recall challenges... a lot of fun and serious at the same time.

[NB: the fun cube pictured here in stylish colours are available from An Elephant Brain online]

Can Shopping Lists Save You?

and the impact of memorizing them on brain health



They certainly saved me! Memorizing lists - especially and conveniently shopping lists - can have several major benefits for brain health and cognitive function... at any age. I found this out first-hand following a motor-bike accident as a youth about to enter university. The accident left me with a badly fractured skull and Traumatic Brain Injury.

Putting aside the fact I was lucky to be even alive at this point, I moaned that the timing was pretty bad, as I was struggling to remember what someone had told me minutes earlier, let alone try to remember lectures or revise for exams. This was when I first adopted specialist memory training to get my life back... and the best training ground up front was to be supermarkets and shopping lists.

Anyone can adopt the simple techniques I train today with An Elephant Brain to remember, 10... 20... 50... 90 and more items - yes, remembering every one. Students, professionals, post-stroke victims and seniors can all add to their brain health via learning and practicing simple techniques.

Memory Exercises: Memorizing a shopping list is a very focussed form of memory exercise; it challenges your working memory, which is responsible for temporarily holding and manipulating information. Regular exercise of your memory can help improve recall and overall cognitive function.

Cognitive Engagement: Memorization requires mental effort and focus; instead of just reading from a list, engaging your brain in such an activity in concentration can help keep it active and sharp, reducing significantly the risk of cognitive decline as you age.

Brain Plasticity: Memorization can contribute to brain plasticity, the brain's ability to adapt and reorganize itself; when you challenge your brain with new information, it forms new neural connections, enhancing its flexibility and adaptability.

Attention and Concentration: Memorizing a shopping list forces you to pay attention to details and concentrate on the task at hand; this can help improve your ability to focus and sustain attention, which are essential cognitive skills.

Organization and Planning: Creating and memorizing a shopping list also involves a degree of organization and planning such skills can help you stay mentally organized and structured in other aspects of your life... which is key

Stress Reduction: Having a memorized shopping list can reduce stress, as you don't have to rely on external reminders, such as notes or smartphone apps... I leave my written lists in the car. Reduced stress can have a positive impact on your overall brain health as well as boosting overall self-confidence.

Of course, whilst memorizing shopping lists can be an enormously helpful brain exercise, it's just one of many ways to maintain and improve cognitive function. Engaging in a variety of mental exercises, such as puzzles, reading, learning new skills, and social interaction, is also important for brain health. Additionally, a healthy lifestyle that includes a balanced diet, regular physical activity, and adequate sleep can further support your brain's health and cognitive function. I know... I've been there...



Memory in Business

Memory Training in Business

and the importance of “natural” intelligence...



Why would anyone need a better memory in this day and age? Haven't we got Google and smartphones?? We hear this all the time and yes, good questions. But as humans, surely there is a world still outside that of the online. Indeed, there are so many reasons as to why a "great" memory is important in business today... and it really has little to do with intelligence as such. We only know what we can remember; and the better one can encode and recall data, the better the outcome.

So, who can benefit... business owners or corporate executives seeking strategic outcomes, students keen to excel in exams, retired seniors ready to preserve brain health with increased mental activity... in fact, ANYONE wanting or needing to improve their memory can benefit from memory training. Just some of the potential benefit details for individuals in a business setting are listed below:

Enhanced Productivity: Improved memory skills allow employees to remember and recall important information more quickly and accurately; this helps them work more efficiently, reducing time spent searching for information or double-checking details; thus productivity levels can increase significantly.

Increased Learning Efficiency: Memory techniques and training improve learning efficiency by teaching individuals how to retain information more effectively. With better memory skills, employees can absorb and integrate new knowledge and skills more rapidly, resulting in shorter training periods and faster onboarding for new hires.

Improved Client and Customer Interactions: In business, strong interpersonal relationships are crucial. By remembering and recalling key details about clients, such as their preferences, previous conversations, or specific needs, employees can build stronger connections. This personalized approach fosters trust, customer satisfaction, and long-term loyalty.

Enhanced Presentation Skills: Memory training techniques, such as visualization exercises, can significantly boost presentation skills. Employees can deliver speeches, pitches, or training sessions confidently, without relying heavily on notes or slides, improving engagement, maintaining audience interest and enhances the overall impact.

Better Problem-Solving: A well-trained memory allows individuals to draw connections between seemingly unrelated pieces of information, leading to innovative problem-solving approaches. Employees can identify patterns, recall relevant experiences, and apply previously acquired knowledge to find creative solutions to complex challenges.

Efficient Information Retention: Business environments often involve large volumes of information, including market trends, industry regulations, and competitive analysis. Memory training helps better equip individuals with techniques to absorb and retain this information effectively, ensuring they stay up-to-date and apply knowledge when needed.

Increased Confidence: Enhanced memory skills provide individuals with a sense of confidence and self-assurance. They can rely on their ability to recall information, which positively impacts their overall performance and effectiveness. Increased confidence encourages employees to take on new challenges and responsibilities, fostering growth.

Competitive Advantage: Memory training sets individuals apart from their peers and colleagues. By possessing exceptional memory skills, employees become valuable assets to their organizations. They can provide quick and accurate information, make better-informed decisions, and contribute to strategic initiatives and a company's competitive edge.

So yes, while we continue to enjoy the benefits of advances in technology and instant information at our fingertips, it's nice to think that when the board, your boss or a client asks a pertinent question, rather than your response being "Just a minute, let me check my phone..." would it not be much better for an answer to come straight off the top of your head.

Of course, we think artificial intelligence is amazing, but for now, natural intelligence still sits at the head of the table. And as we said, memory is not assumed to equate directly from intelligence but from simple techniques... and potentially life-changing ones at that.

A Fate Worse Than Death?

... not when employing simple memory techniques



The fear of public speaking, often referred to as glossophobia, is a common and intense fear that many people experience. It's often cited as one of the most common fears and the idea that it's even more frightening than death no doubt an exaggeration but one meant to highlight the intensity of this fear.

Several factors can contribute to the fear of getting up on stage to speak:

Fear of judgment: One of the primary reasons people fear public speaking is the fear of being judged or criticized by others. When you're on stage or in front of an audience, you might feel that all eyes are on you, and the thought of making a mistake or being perceived negatively can be overwhelming.

Performance anxiety: Public speaking often involves a performance aspect; like any performance, there's a risk of failure of not meeting audience expectations. This can lead to significant anxiety.

Loss of control: Speaking in public can feel like a loss of control, being exposed and may feel vulnerable to unexpected challenges like technical issues, questions from the audience, or own nervousness.

Fear of forgetting: A common fear is forgetting what you wanted to say. The anxiety of going blank on stage can be paralyzing. *The GOOD NEWS* here is that the use of simple memory techniques can indeed help alleviate most of the fears associated with public speaking:

Mind mapping: Create a visual representation of your speech or presentation through mind mapping can help you organize your thoughts and remember all the key points you want to cover.

Key List & Chunking: Breaking your speech into smaller, manageable chunks or sections and in order makes it easier to remember and present each part of your speech, removing the fear of going blank.

Visualization: Visualize yourself giving the speech successfully. This technique can reduce anxiety and build your confidence.

Practice and repetition: The more you practice, the more natural, relaxed and confident you become and will be seen. Rehearse your speech multiple times to reinforce your memory of the content.

Use notes strategically: While it's often better not to rely too heavily on notes, having cue cards or a basic outline can provide a safety net if you forget something... we help you get rid of those cards!

Engage with your audience: Interacting with your audience can help reduce the fear of judgment. When you see friendly faces and positive reactions, it can boost your confidence.

Slow down: It's so tempting to rush ahead so you can get off that stage; but get past that and start to speak slowly; this allows you time to think as you speak, reducing the chances of going blank.

Control your breathing: Deep, controlled breathing can help manage anxiety and ensure your brain gets the oxygen it needs to function at its best.

It's important to note that public speaking anxiety is common, and many people experience it to varying degrees. It can be managed and even overcome with practice and the use of memory techniques. The more you expose yourself to public speaking and employ these techniques, the more confident and comfortable you'll become on stage. On a personal note, I often like to start with, "My mind's a complete blank!" and then pause to see the reactions; naturally I follow up, "When you're done training here, this is the one thing you will likely never say or experience again!"



Memory in Education

Learn-Remember-Excel!

...the case for memory training in education.



Well, let's first state the obvious... that a good memory does not simply equate to intelligence or intellect. Clearly, understanding in any subject and the skill of the teacher to impart knowledge and evoke interest are all key. That said, if a student's task is to recite or recreate lists of data, knowing the full list up front via easy recall is a great starting point!

Now we're not talking mnemonics here; as someone who grew up with ROTE for times tables, alphabet and French lessons, with Every Good Boy Deserves Favour in music, or solar system planet order via My Very Eager Mother Just Saw Ugly Nancy... such tricks may be OK, but have very limited scope in extensive fields of learning.

Most people would agree "a picture paints a thousand words" and there is clear understanding in brain research re' "picture superiority" when it comes to encoding, retaining and recalling facts. It is estimated the human brain can assimilate an image 60,000 times faster than the word description... and so it is in this area where memory training can overlay and intertwine to supplement traditional and current learning methods.

And if students can benefit, one would assume so would their teachers. In fact, on the latter, in an area where schools hotly compete to win the university entry stats, one can imagine the impact of a school-wide integrated strategy.

When seeing someone transform from hardly remembering half a dozen items on a shopping list to being able to recall every one of 50 items and more in any order - days later if needed - is something to behold. People who literally never gave their memory a second thought, who had presumed we're all stuck with what we're given and that great memories belong to only the gifted lucky few, soon know that myth can easily be broken.

So, when it comes to education, particularly around exam time, a system which can relieve the stress of "cramming" can be very useful. Being able to transpose a technique from shopping items to geographic data, historical events, brain anatomy or whatever, is quickly taken on board.

An Elephant Brain clients come from commerce, health and education. Earliest course participants have been seniors or post stroke recoverees keen on improving brain health. But for students (outside school curricula) they have been able to adopt, absorb and apply more rapidly than others.

From Fractured Skull to First

how a near-fatal accident aided my honours degree...



“Who needs a crash helmet? One stupid day in history.”

On one unusually warm, sunny Sunday back in February 1969, it seemed like the perfect day for a trip with my girlfriend Theresa to ride through the Leicestershire countryside on my highly chromed and trendy Vespa scooter. We were so cool in our full-length leather coats and yellow tinted sunnies - no need for those “square” helmets - as we set off on our dream ride. *[Note: this was the 1960's... there is no way I would ride any bike today without wearing a crash hat!]*

There was virtually no traffic, until I noticed a car moving slowly ahead of me, a Citroen Traction Avant (moulded spare wheel cover on boot) and I remember remarking that the car we were just about to overtake was the same as one we had seen in a WW2 movie the night before. The next thing I remember... I was waking up in a hospital bed, unable to move or speak.

Witnesses later described the accident; as I was passing this car at around 45mph (just over 70km/hr) the driver suddenly decided to do a U-turn; we hit the side of the bonnet at full speed almost square on but at such an angle where the scooter and Theresa bounced off to the right into bushes on the median strip; but for me, I somehow flew "Christopher Reeve style" straight ahead, apparently doing some sort of paratrooper roll as I hit the tarmac hard many metres ahead.

Luckily Theresa was OK, escaping with a few small bruises and scratches on her arm as her coat and the bike mostly protected her. I didn't fare so well... although a pretty fit young soccer player, I clearly couldn't fly! With no helmet, I ended up with a badly gashed head, a lump-on-lump forehead and cheekbone, bleeding from the ears, a chunk taken out of my knee... and a fractured skull.

After two weeks in hospital and five weeks before returning to work, apart from the headaches, one major outcome was brain trauma induced, short term memory loss. Although I felt lucky to be alive, I was feeling sorry for myself over the bad timing just prior to entry into university. My memory was letting me down badly on everything... tasks at work... study... I couldn't concentrate. I'd go to the store for a loaf of bread to come back with canned peaches or condensed milk.

In desperation I started to research methods to see if I could get back to the old me, ready for some up-and-coming exams. It was then, I found a "mental imaging" memory technique training course being sold in the USA which I gladly tried and found I could adapt to suit my own needs... and it worked!

Starting out with 3, 5, 10... then 25 items and more, I would practice my "key list" system of memorising shopping list items at the local supermarket until I could remember every one each time. As the days and weeks progressed, I remembered more things more easily as I used on longer and longer lists. Importantly, I was able to adapt and transpose the same techniques from shopping items to paragraphs in reports, dates in history and more.

Memory technique perfection for me personally was to become a real life-changer - indeed life-saver even - as it helped me gain entry into my chosen degree course and take me through university to graduate with First-class Honours. I often pondered if there was some irony in that, had I not had the near fatal accident, would I have excelled in that way... who knows.

The same memory techniques were to take me through my whole professional career; so, when again hitting a memory loss challenge in the aftermath of a mini-stroke more than five decades later - a story for another time - this was again my saviour and the basis of this venture.

For The Price of a Breakfast?

memory training at super affordable pricing!



OK, perhaps a little hyperbole in that title... but it is true for in-house "groups" at the price per person! I have to say, I was in two minds to even post such a title, as it tends to undersell the worth of what changes this training can bring about in someone's life. To be frank (only family call me by that name) when you have access to a potentially life-changing program, essentially in the making by default for over 50 years, how can you place a price or value on that. And for the online program, where the content is same but simply broken down into smaller packs for home convenience, similar courses might sell for hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Beyond all that, what we can say in full certainty is that participants in any of these programs will be exposed to the same quality and value... and for some the outcome will be life-changing.

In the realm of memory, there is a distinct gap which often emerges that separates the discomfort stemming from a poor memory from the delight associated with having a remarkable memory. Where the cost of bridging this void may have once seemed insurmountable, "memory enhancement training" today from An Elephant Brain achieved solves this to be deliberately at an astonishingly low investment.

Memory as we know is an essential cognitive function, which wields considerable influence over our daily lives... basically in everything we do; yet most people hardly give memory a second thought, so to speak. They simply ignore the fact they hold within their unique cranium an enormously untapped reservoir of imagination and skill. Perhaps childhood conditioning or simply the assumption that great memories somehow belong to only geniuses and the lucky or gifted few... leaves many with the assumption that we're stuck with what we're given. But nothing could be farther than the truth.

The anguish of forgetting crucial information or the names of cherished individuals can yield a sense of frustration and inconvenience, akin to the sting of pain. On the flip side, the exhilaration linked with effortlessly recollecting facts, experiences and details is akin to the profound joy we derive from achieving previously unimagined mental feats.

The benefits are clearly manifold:

Enhanced recall

Improved learning efficiency

Revitalized sense of confidence

Memory training acts as a catalyst for transforming the disheartening discomfort of forgetfulness into the satisfying elation of effective memory utilization. It literally can be a real life-changer... as one who has come back twice from brain trauma, I would personally describe it to have been a life-saver. Today, the journey from memory-related anguish to memory-related delight is open to individuals from all walks of life. And there's no need to take out a second mortgage... it's in everyone's budget.

Referring back to the post title, a more striking aspect of this transformation is affordability; as the in-house live program is held in groups sizes typically of 10 - 20 people, such as a get-together with a bunch of friends or colleagues... or community groups, the cost is miniscule per person, as little as that of a coffee and a burger breakfast each! And online is also priced to be more than pocket friendly.

Seriously, whether you're a student needing to excel in exams, a professional wishing to advance your career, a senior or indeed anyone interested in the preserving healthy brain function, who wouldn't want to invest a few bucks to potentially change their whole life!

An Elephant Brain



Francis FitzGerald

"Our memory is at the core of everything we think, say and do... it's central to knowing what we know and to who we are... and still, it can be so much more..."

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