

NEWSLETTERS 2002-2004

MEMORY ENHANCEMENT TIPS

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MULTITASKING: To do two things at once is to do neither" Pubilius Syrus. Do you start to do something, get distracted, and then find out that you forgot what it was that you were getting ready to do? Sounds like a very common complaint especially with the information overload that many of us experience on a daily basis. Paying attention and staying focused on a task can be a real challenge. Identify your pattern and see if you are one of those people who frequently does several things at a time – thus not giving any one thing the total attention it deserves.

LOST ITEMS: If you know an older adult who frequently loses track of where they put important papers, letters, bills, etc. you might help them organize the information by setting up an accordion file to store important mail and papers. Label each section and when they sort the mail, they can put things in the proper pocket, such as bills to pay, receipts, insurance forms, invitations, meetings, etc. This way the papers they need are always in one place.

BUSYNESS:

Desire to have things done quickly prevents their being done thoroughly.

CONFUCIUS

Multitasking can make it hard to switch gears easily. With a lot of thoughts swirling around in your mind, your concentration may be compromised. *Notice how often you get interrupted, how it makes you feel and how successful you are in getting things done.* Today make an effort to do one thing at a time. Be totally present in the moment. When eating, just eat; when reading just read. Do not allow any other background distraction. Relax and enjoy the experience.

MAXIMIZING COMMUNICATION: In an earlier newsletter, I featured Chip and Sharon Gerber. This is an excerpt from his journal, which is an excellent resource for those wanting to have a better understanding of Alzheimer's disease. "Sharon just got a new intercom system for our home. It saves a lot of energy and undue stress on my part. It's simple and with one button I can be talking with her no matter where she is in the home. The intercom equipment is in the rooms where we spend most of our time.

I like Sharon to have some privacy and time for herself and yet I get stuck often and have questions. There are things I need to ask or say before I forget them. We use to just yell when one was in another room or down the hall. It was so frustrating, for both of us. At times one or the other did not hear or only heard part of what was being said. Now I just have to press the large button and speak

into the equipment. All Sharon has to do is the same on her end.

When Alzheimer's disease invades a home, one must keep looking and thinking of ways to eliminate difficulties and frustration. With some of this equipment available, and much of it for little cost, it can be a saver."

VISUALIZE: Here is a suggestion from one of the participants of the Minor Memory Frustration Series. Visualize what you are looking for BEFORE you go to find it. If you are looking for something in a drawer, see yourself using it before you try and find it. You are less likely to open the drawer then wonder why you are standing there. Perhaps you need to take the trash out to the curb but get distracted with a phone call. Try visualizing yourself doing the task as you are picking up the phone. When you are finished with the phone call, you are more likely to remember what you were just about to do before you were interrupted.

HOLIDAYS: With the upcoming holiday season, it is important to keep the needs and level of functioning of the older adult in mind when planning an event or a family get-together. If the older adult has some memory limitations, all of the hustle and bustle of activity can be too much for them. Stick to a routine and simplify whenever possible. Honoring old traditions is as important as adjusting expectations and creating some new ones.
