

Speaker seeks to help memory

Hudson resident has 13-step process

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"I can't remember where I put my keys" is an often-made remark that sometimes can send shivers down one's back. It ranks along with "I forgot I had a doctor's appointment" and "I don't remember writing a check for the utilities bill."

The older a person gets, the more apt he/she is going to silently ask "Where is my forgetfulness leading to?"

The more things that are forgotten, the more frightening the future appears to the elderly.

Do you know that senior citizens don't have the market on minor memory frustrations? In today's rapid-paced society, forgetfulness is being experienced by people in their 30s and 40s.

INDEED, MANY SENIORS can scoff mild memory loss off, too, if they listen to what Kathy Kilpatrick of Hudson has to say and follow her advice.

Kilpatrick is an author, trainer, consultant and speech pathologist in private practice.

She's had 30 years of experience in program development and therapy with senior citizens which have earned her the title of geriatric communication consultant.

AN EARLY AUGUST SEMINAR conducted by Kilpatrick at Canton Regency left an audience expressing a number of emotions; some attendees were relieved that they were not headed for serious ailments, while others realized that their forgetfulness stemmed from doing "too much at one time."

Taking on too much at one time also is most often the answer to the younger population's growing forgetfulness, Kilpatrick pointed out.

"Everyone's worried that they're having "a senior moment" and they're worried about its implication when, in fact, frequently it's because

they're not paying attention, not organized, don't listen, or are preoccupied."

There you are – the answer to many people's concerns. But it's not that simple for everyone.

"If there is more than minor memory frustration, getting to the doctor for a complete assessment is in order," Kilpatrick says.

"Find out if there's anything else going on. It can be something as simple as poor sleep, poor nutrition or even medication interaction. But, it's important to take this step.

"There are things we need to do to keep mentally fit," Kirkpatrick said. "A lot of people do not maximize their memory because their world gets smaller and smaller as they age."

KILPATRICK USES THE "keys" to illustrate overcoming the frustration.

"One of the things we need to do is focus; so if we're putting our keys down as we walk into the house and we're not paying attention because we are also carrying in groceries," she said.

"We're either listening to somebody who's on the answering machine or the phone rings as we walk through the door and we're also thinking 'Oh, m'gosh, I forgot to defrost the hamburger,' we're paying absolutely no attention to what we are doing with the keys.

"Many of us feel that our memory's getting worse and worse and memory loss is not inevitable with aging, but the fact that we are on such horrific overload is what is causing us many memory problems.

"It's too much multitasking (doing more than one thing at a time). How many times does someone do something and totally focus on that particular thing? This comes down to repeating, repeating, and repeating."

KILPATRICK SUGGESTS the following aids to help peo-



Photo provided

MEMORY EXPERT – Kathy Kilpatrick is shown speaking to seniors at the Canton Regency in August.

ple keep their memory on track:

1. Pay attention and try to visualize what it is you want to remember.

2. Place things in the same place such as the car keys on the same hook or the scissors in a particular drawer.

3. Use a calendar to keep track of appointments, birthdays or special events. Using one that shows the entire week on two pages allows you space to also write reminder notes of things to do that day. If possible keep the calendar size small enough so that you can easily carry it with you. Write things down as they come up rather than trying to recall them later.

4. Write something you need to remember for a certain day on a piece of paper and tape it in the calendar or use a Post-it note. Tape a note by the door as a reminder if you need to take something with you when you go out.

5. Avoid using loose slips of paper that will easily get lost. Keep all of your information in a small spiral bound notebook. That way the pages are attached, the information is in one place and you can easily refer back to it later.

6. Now may be the time to take all of those odd pieces of paper with phone numbers and addresses and record them in one place, whether it is in a new address book or on the computer.

7. When you store less frequently used items, keep a reference list as to where you put them so that you can find them more easily.

8. Use an accordion file to store important mail and papers. Label each section and when you sort the mail, put things in the proper pocket, such as bills to pay, receipts,

insurance forms, invitations, meetings, etc. This way the papers you need are always in one place.

9. If you are having trouble recalling telephone numbers, consider a phone with speed-dialing features and larger buttons. Shop around and get one that is easy to program.

10. If someone wants to leave a lengthy phone message, make sure you write it down. If you have an answering machine, you may want to suggest that they call back and leave the message on the machine.

Then you can have it to listen to several times if necessary.

11. Write out the directions for things that involve too many steps like setting the microwave or using TV remote control. Do this for things you may do less frequently such as setting the VCR.

12. You may experience more difficulty remembering when you are tired, on overload, not feeling well, or stressed. Sometimes doing things that require multiple steps such as balancing the checkbook will be easier to handle when you are more rested.

13. Try eliminating some of the distractions such as the television, radio or background conversation when you are trying to concentrate. Giving a task your full attention can make a lot of difference.

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Kilpatrick's "Minor Memory Frustrations" is just one segment of her Memory Series. She has numerous other prepared programs designed for various groups in any community. She can be reached for additional information by calling 330-650-1958.