

SESSION 4: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STRATEGIES FOR COGNITIVE CHALLENGES

Presented by: Heather Campbell BHSc, MScOT, OT (Reg.) Ont. Occupational Therapist at the Positive Approach – Prevention and Rehabilitation Services



Who am I?

Heather Campbell Occupational Therapist

I have worked across Canada, doing hospital and community occupational therapy.

Currently, I work in Toronto, helping people in the community recover from their injuries after car accidents.

I work with people who have brain injuries, concussions, spinal cord injuries, mental health diagnoses and physical injuries.



Life Skills Sessions – 4 Weeks

Week 1: The Pillars of Health and Self Care

• Slide Handouts available from Nichole

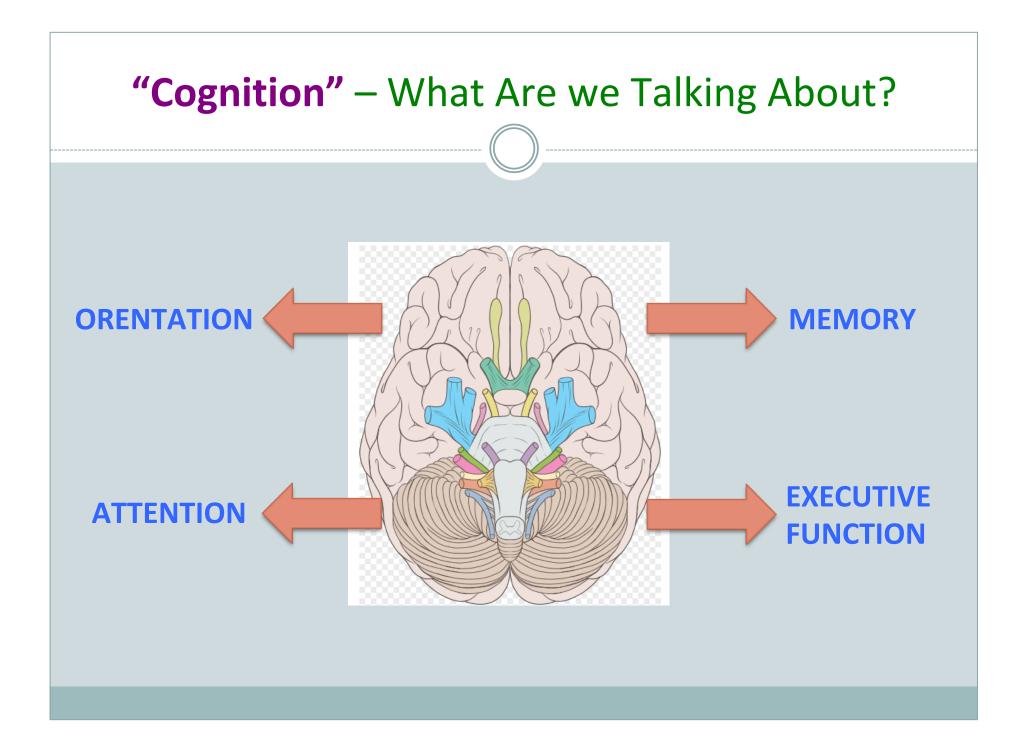
Week 2: How to Successfully Organize your Week

• Slide Handouts available from Nichole

Week 3: Practical Ways to be Kind to Yourself

• Slide Handouts available from Nichole

Week 4: Internal and External Strategies to Assist with Cognitive Challenges - TODAY



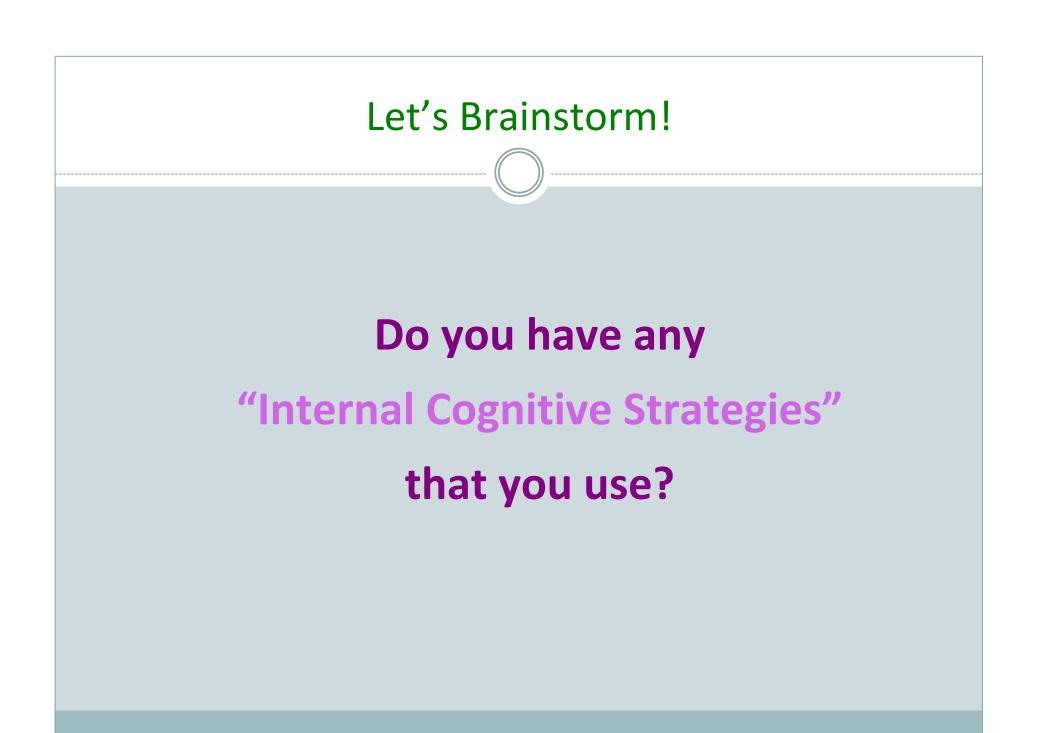
What is an "Internal" Cognitive Strategy?

A strategy that requires you to **mentally process** and **think** about information in a different way.

You are **"re-teaching"** your brain new ways to do things.

This happens within yourself.

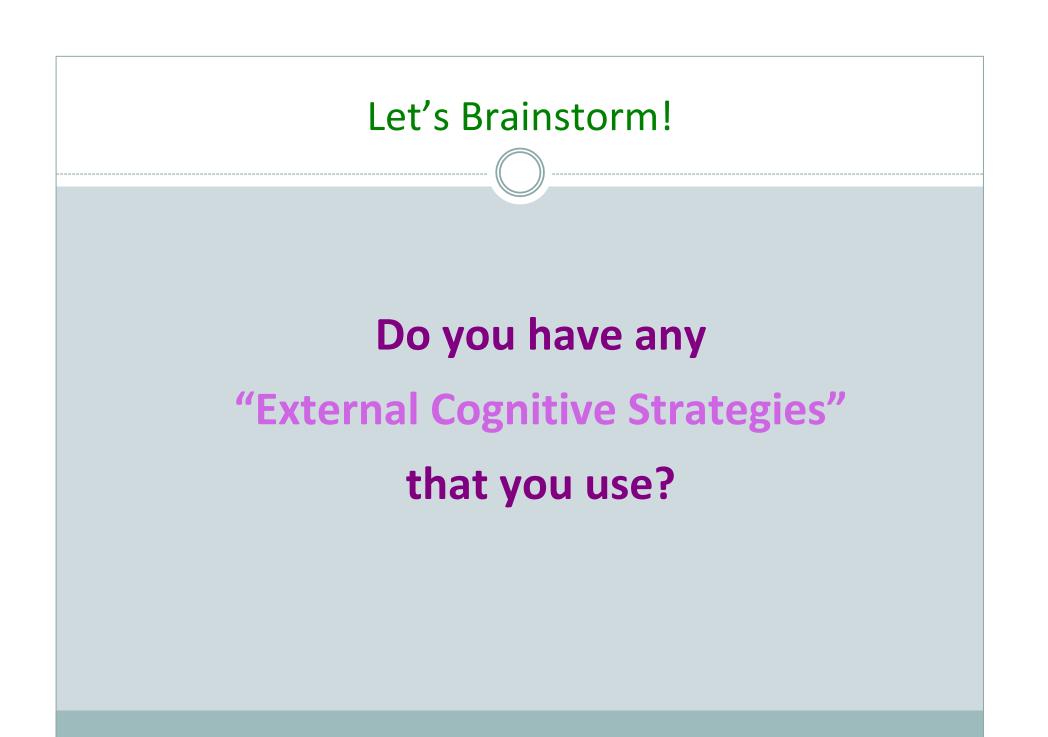


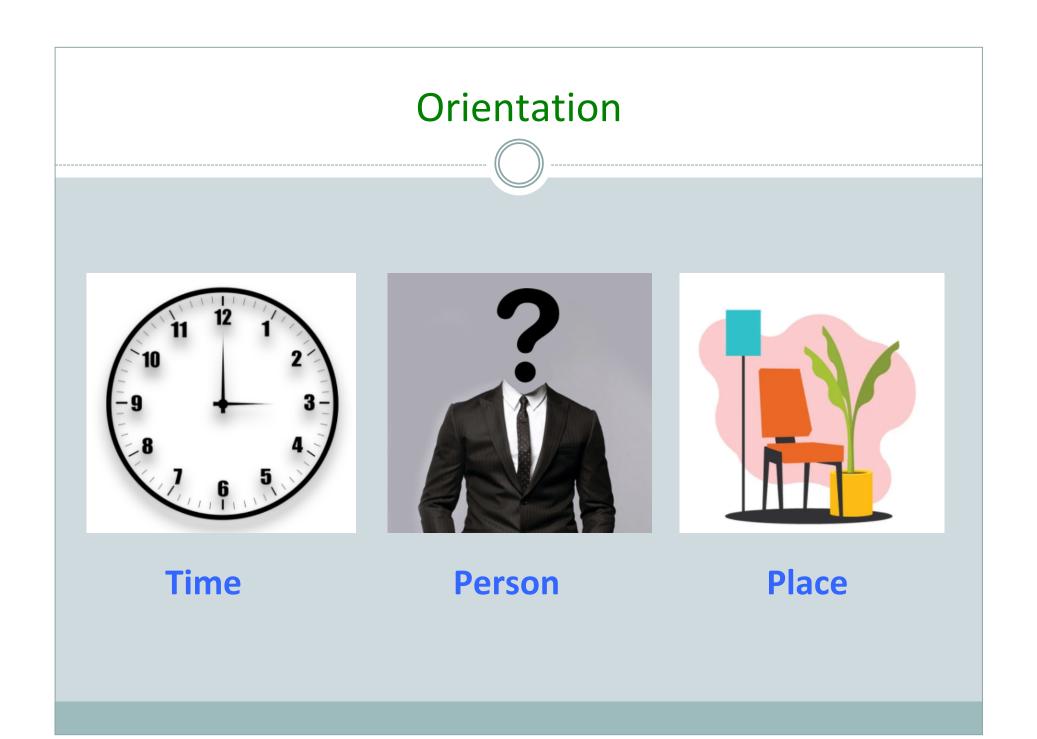


What is an "External" Cognitive Strategy?

This is an cognitive aid that you can physically touch. OR A strategy/aid that exists outside of yourself.







Orientation

Internal Strategies

- Repetition
- Talking with others about the day, time of day, date, season
- Talking with others about current events, personal information

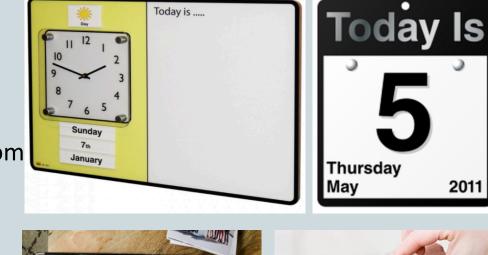


Remember: Seek Medical Help if you or someone else becomes disoriented

Orientation

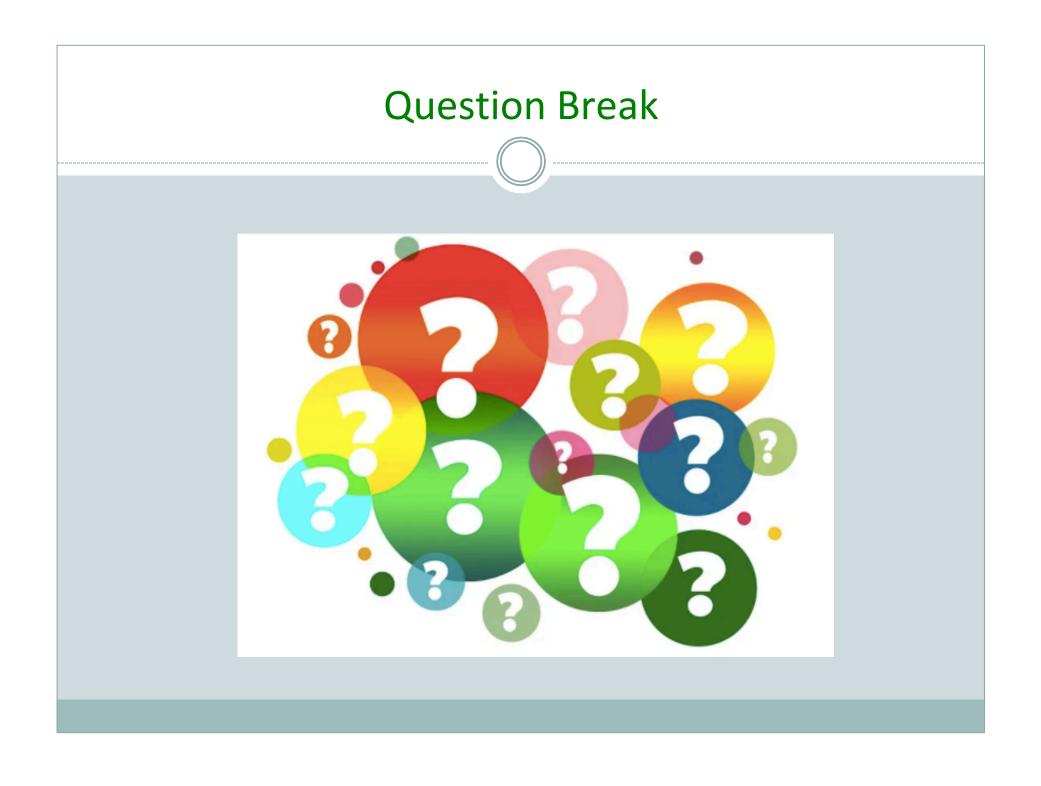
External Strategies

- Keeping a daily journal
- Checking Clocks and Calendars
- Reminders (alarms, post-its, from others)
- Signs on doors, cupboards, objects
- Photos, Memorabilia
- Make surroundings familiar

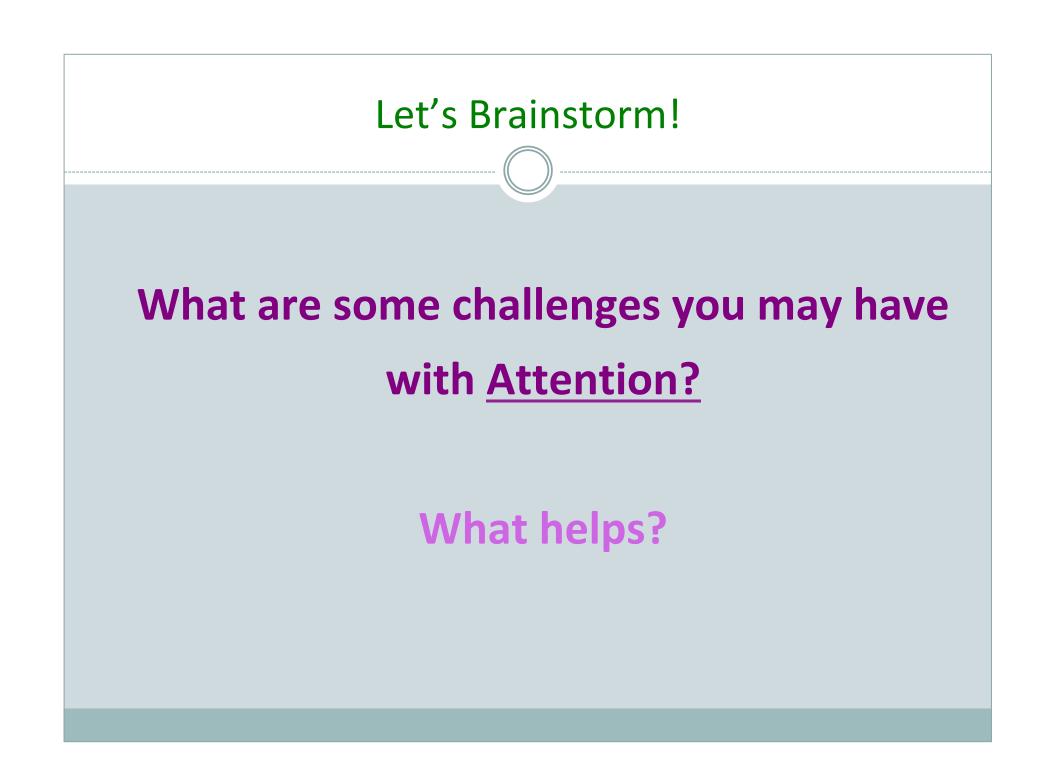




Remember: Seek Medical Help if you or someone else becomes disoriented

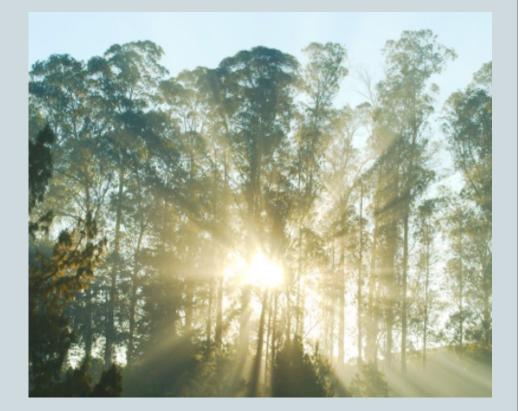






Pick your Time of Day!

In most cases, our brains deal better with tasks involving conscious, "effortful" attention in the morning or mid afternoon.



Take Breaks

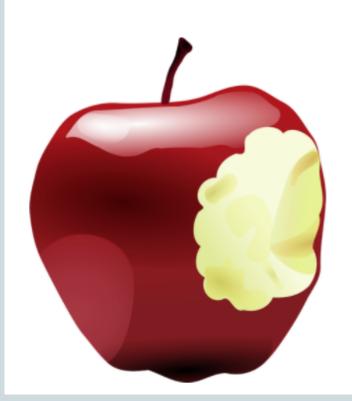
It can be easy to get tired when a person has trouble with attention.



Take short **brain breaks** over the course of the day to rest.

Bite-Sized Tasks

Do things one step at a time, breaking tasks down into **"bite-sized"** steps.



Keep to a Routine

Tasks that have become

habits in our daily

routines are automatic,

and will require less

attention



2018-07-146

Consider Time Pressures

When we are rushing through through tasks, it can be hard to maintain attention.

Give yourself enough time!



Repeat New Information

Take new information in small bits, and repeat it often.

Say it out loud, summarize the steps or write it down!



When Talking to Others

Speak Slowly and Clearly Face the person you are talking to



Practice Setting Aside

Distracting Thoughts



Remove Distractions

A controlled, quiet environment reduces attention demands



Clean, Organized

Environment



Use Checklists

Having step-by-step Instructions support

staying on task and

staying **focused**



Reminders

Timers, Alarms, Smartphone Apps, Cueing from others to stay **focused**.



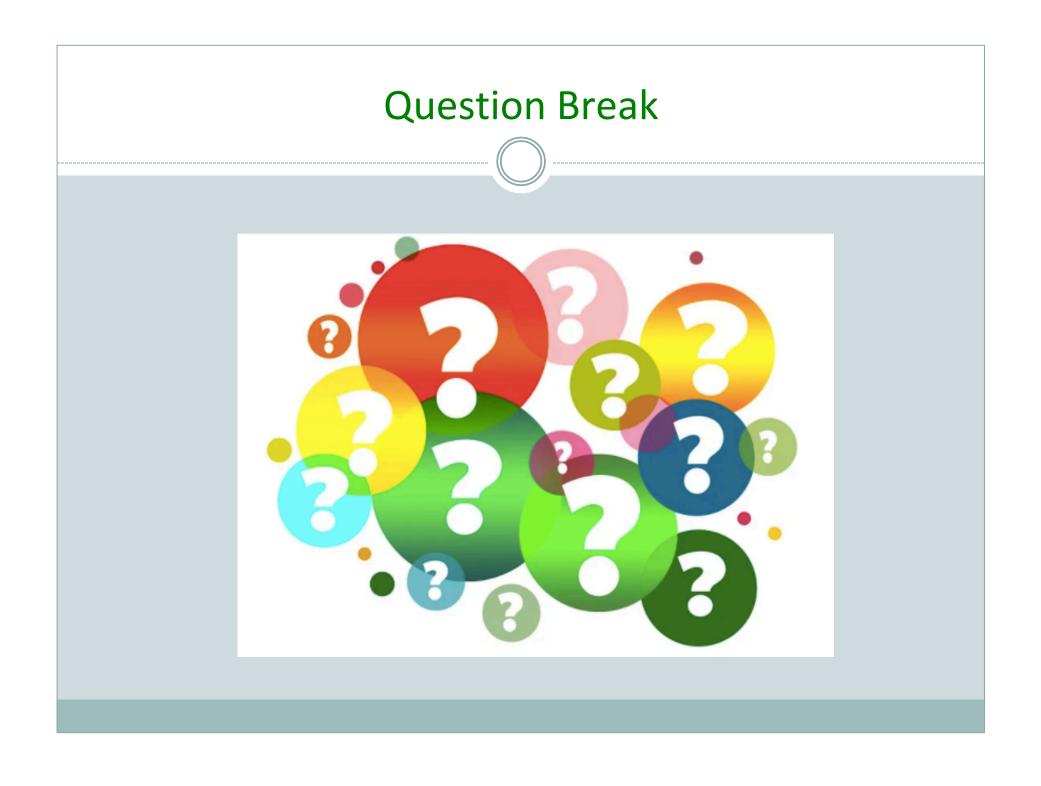
Use Visual Cues

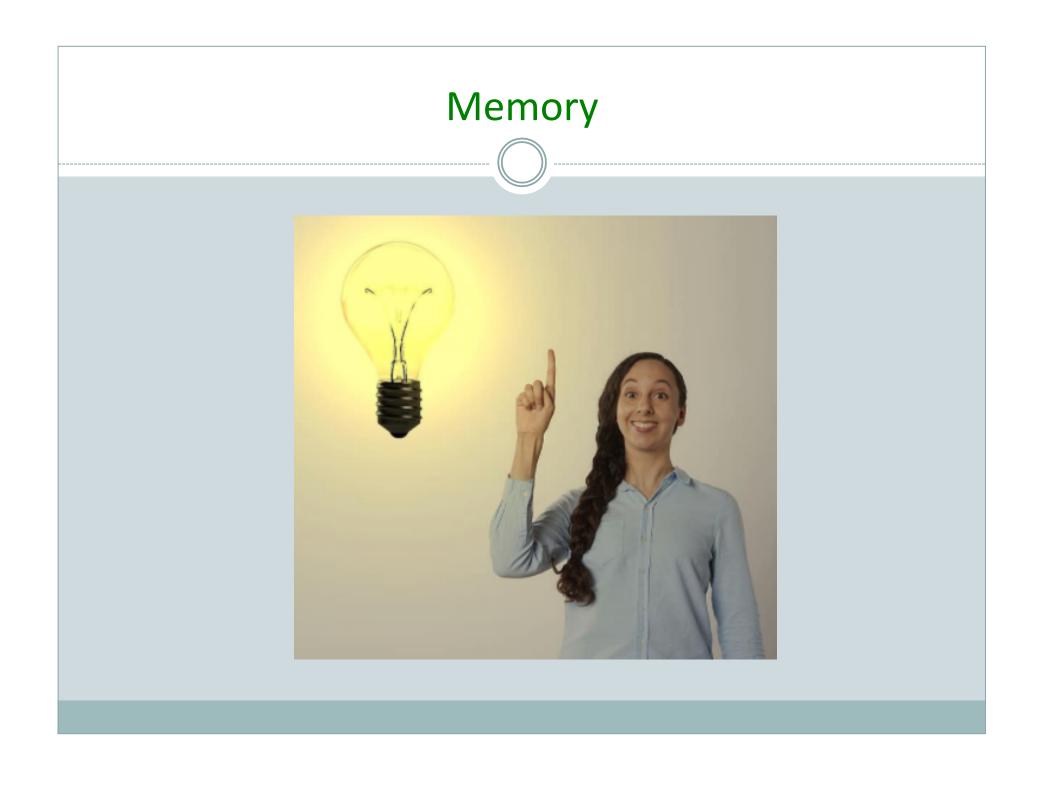
To attract attention to relevant

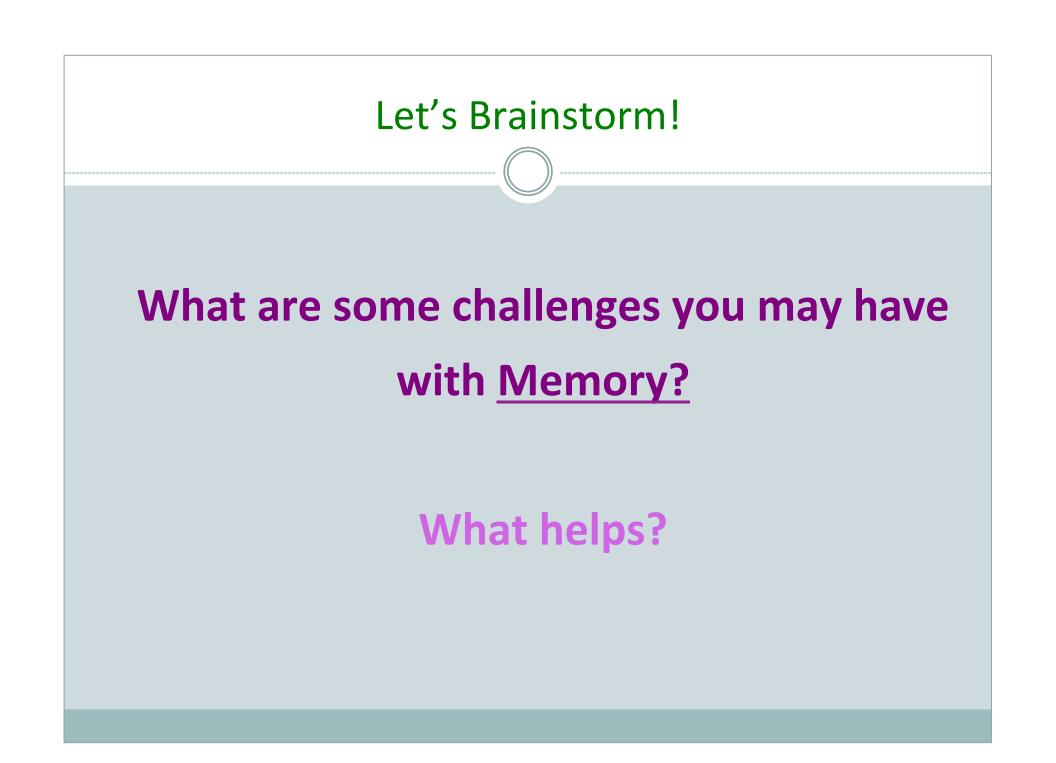
information.











Learning New Information

• "PQRST"



- Preview (Read through once, get a feel for something)
- Question (Ask Questions about what you have read)
- **Read** (Read again, trying to find answers to your questions)
- **State** (Say/write the answers to your questions)
- Test (Read once more, final check)

Visual Imagery

Create pictures in your mind to help you remember something



Example: Picturing in my mind my plants I need to water later

Visual Imagery – Another Example

Name: "Angela King"



Angel



King

Association

Strategy of forming a **meaningful connection** between something you are familiar with, and something you want to remember.

$FAMILIAR \rightarrow UNFAMILIAR$

Association – Example

You are trying to **remember a birthday** of your friend:

December 31. You could remember it by associating this date with

New Years Eve.



First-Letter Cues

Strategy of paying attention to the **first letters** of words that you

are trying to learn or memorize.



Shopping List (Alphabetical)

- Apples
- Bread
- Cream
- Dog Food

First-Letter Cues

<u>Chore List ("Trigger Word")</u> - **DISCO**

- Dust

- Ice Trays Refill
- Shopping
- Clean Bathroom
- Organize Papers



Rehearsal

Repeating information silently in your mind, quietly to yourself, or aloud.



Example: A Phone Number

Active Observation

Consciously paying

attention to your

environment.

Helps with **encoding** a memory.



Example: Finding your Car

Rhymes

Connecting facts together

with similar sounds



Example: Months with 30 days

"30 days has September, April, June, and November"

Categories

- Grouping Information into meaningful categories.
- Helps with recalling large amounts of information



Example: Shopping List Categories (Dairy, Produce, Meat, Bakery, etc.)

Story Method

Creating a story (can be silly)

to include all the things you

want to remember.

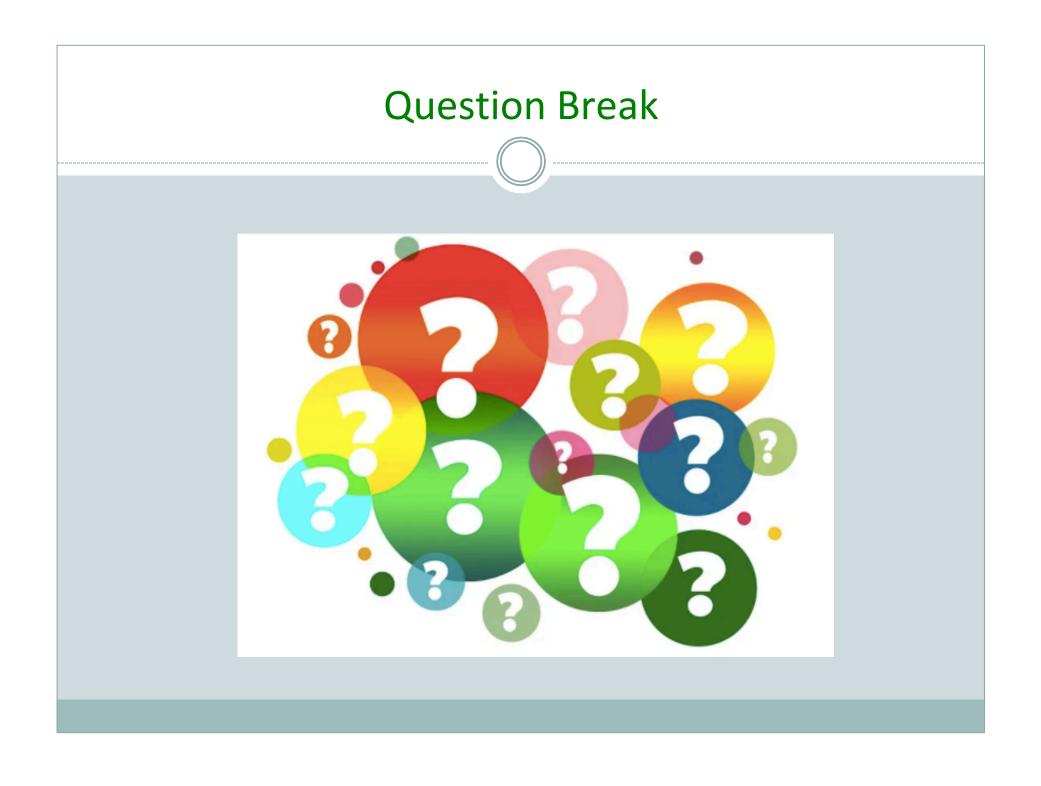
Example: List to Remember

- Feed Dog
- Call Mom
- Pay Phone Bill



Story to Help Remember

"The dog was hungry, so he decided to call my mother to get food. But, he couldn't make the call since the phone bill hadn't been paid!"





Desktop Calendars

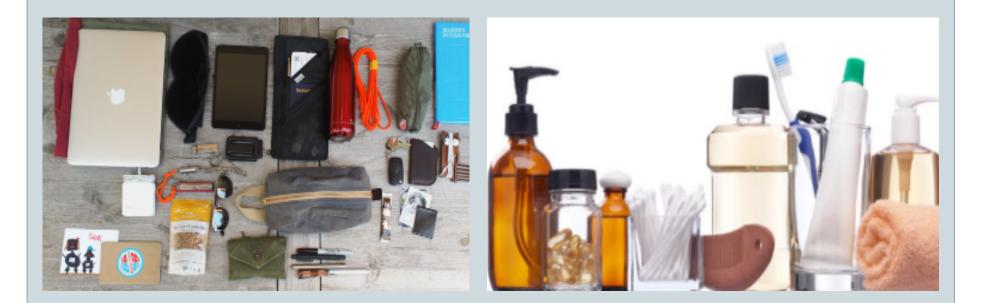


Daytimers



Digital Calendars

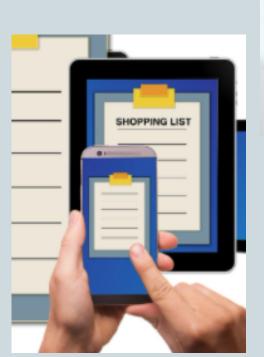
See Session 2 – How to Successfully Organize your Week, for More Details on Calendars



Make an **"Organization Station"** in Your Home



Traditional Notebook





Whiteboard in Home

Smartphone or Tablet

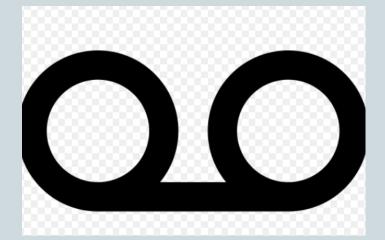
See Session 2 – How to Successfully Organize your Week, for More Details on External Aids



Alarms



Timers



Voicemail Or Voicemail to Text





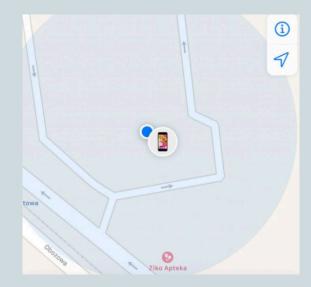
Voice Recorders and Voice Notes

Pill Organizer or Blister Pack





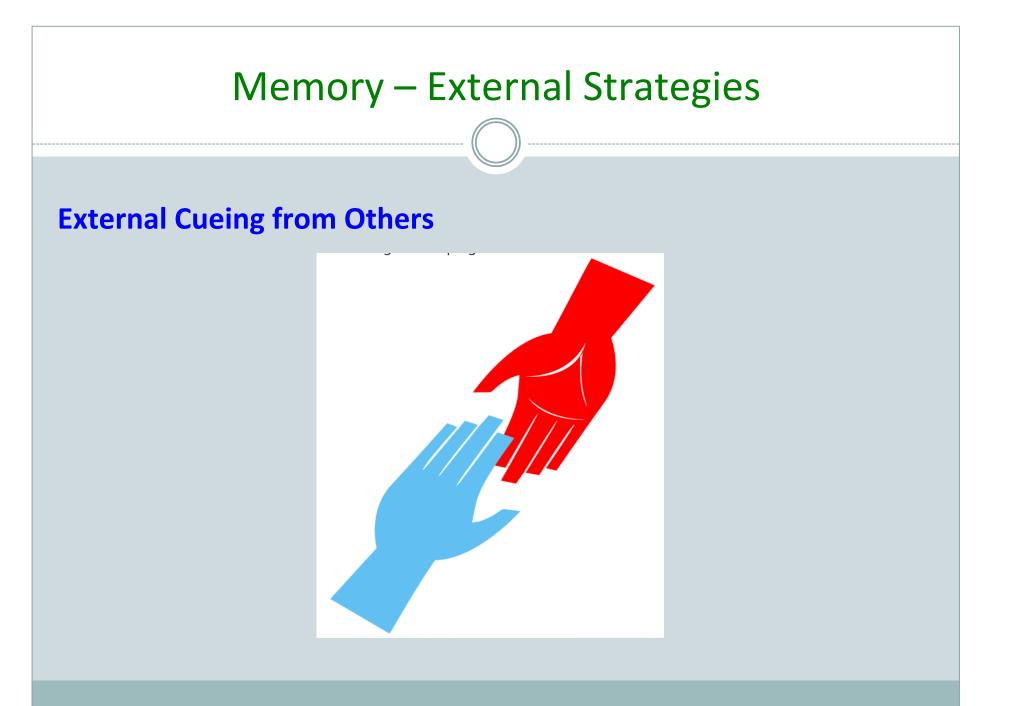
Smartphone Applications

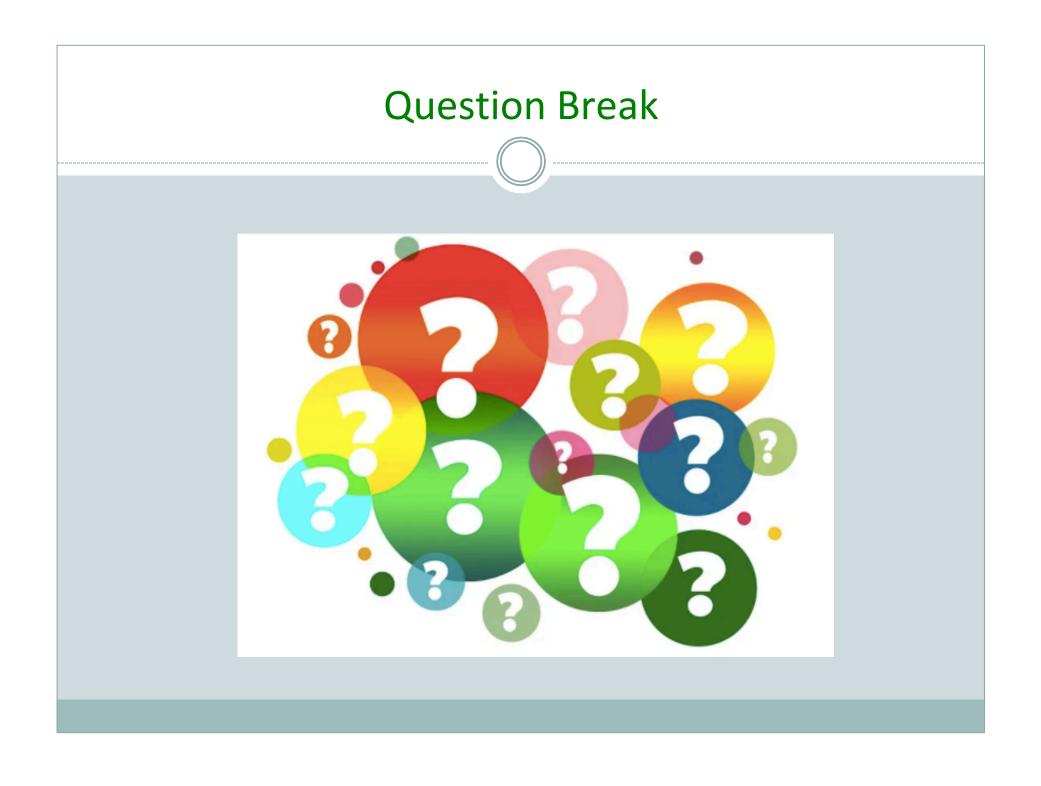


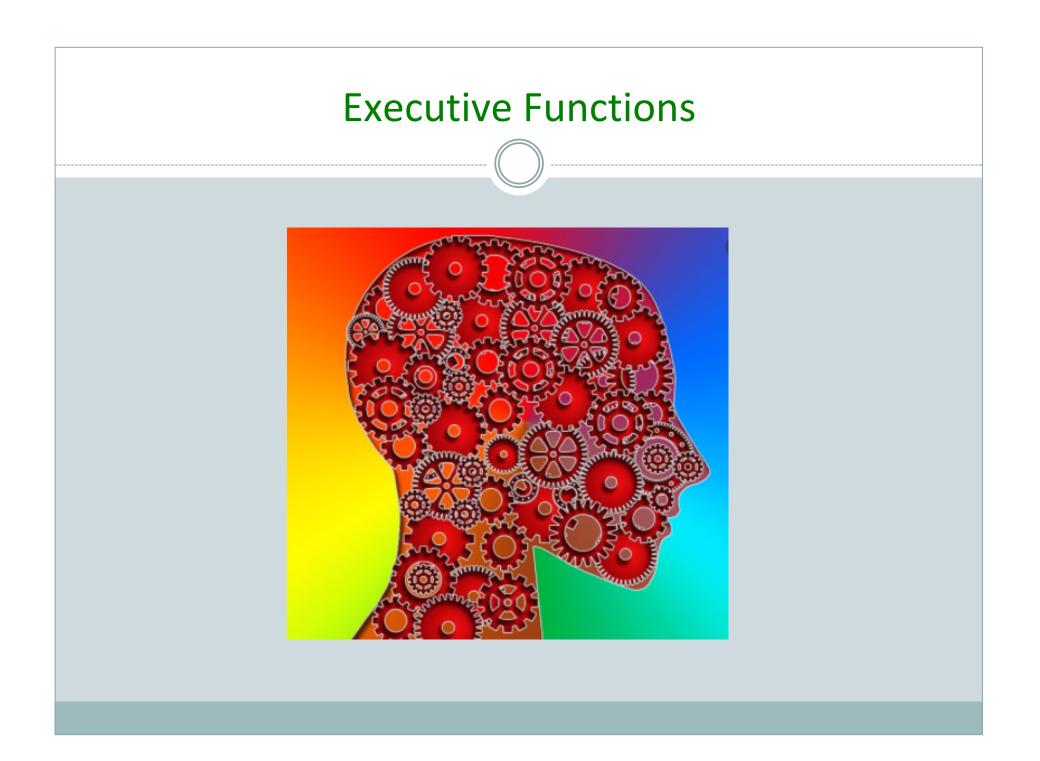
Find My Smartphone



Tile Application







Executive Function - Initiation

Internal Strategies

Bite Sized Tasks Take Breaks Routines Mental Rehearsal



External Strategies

Reduce Distractions Use a Checklist Reminders or Alarms Side-By-Side Tasks External Support

Executive Function – Planning and Problem Solving

Internal Strategies

Break down tasks Plan Breaks and Extra Time Visualizing Problems in Advance Mental Rehearsal

"Talk Aloud" and Brainstorm



External Strategies Write out Steps Use a Checklist Pro/Con List Discuss plans/problems with others External Support

Executive Function – Goal Setting

Internal Strategies

SMART Goals Plan Breaks and Extra Time Mental Rehearsal



External Strategies

Write down Goals Keep a To-Do List Discuss Goals with others External Support



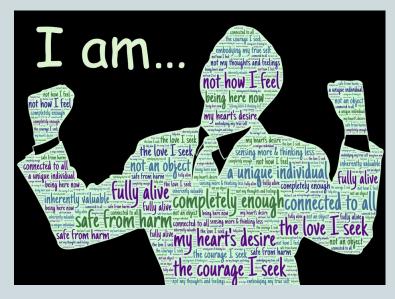
Executive Function – Self-Awareness and Monitoring

Internal Strategies

Check Yourself!

Take a break

Reframe your thinking



External Strategies

Keep a Journal Seek Feedback from Others External Support

Overview – Internal and External Strategies

- **1. Start Simple and Small!**
- **2. Trial and Error is OK**
- **3. Keep Practicing**
- 4. Be Kind to Yourself and Ask for Help

