

# WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY

## Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center



U.S. Air Force photo by  
Airman 1st Class Sean Carnes

1. Avoid distractions. When you are learning new information, focus on what is being said. Pay close attention when you are being given directions, instructions or having a conversation.
2. Get plenty of sleep. Go to sleep at the same time each night, and wake up at the same time each morning. Try not to nap during the day. Avoid exercising within 2 hours of bedtime. Avoid watching TV, playing video games, and using your computer or phone within 1 hour of bedtime.
3. Write it down. Keep a notebook, planner or calendar with you and write down things you need to remember, such as important events or tasks.
4. Avoid alcohol, tobacco and caffeinated drinks, such as coffee, soda and tea. These increase sleep problems, anxiety, blood pressure levels and overall stress.
5. Prioritize. Make a list of things you need to take care of, list them in order of importance, and check them off as you complete them.
6. Maintain a routine. Being consistent can improve your ability to remember information. For example, keep your keys in the same spot every day, take your medication at the same time each day, and park in the same areas.
7. Stay mentally active. Playing card games or doing crossword puzzles are great ways to keep your mind active. There also are smartphone and tablet apps that exercise your brain. Read regularly, and try to learn something new every day.
8. Lower your stress level. Don't take on too much at one time. Keep stress to a minimum by staying on top of important tasks. Learn to say "no" when you start to feel overwhelmed, and ask for help when you need it.
9. Stay physically active. Regular exercise helps prevent fatigue and improves concentration. Consult your health care provider before returning to physical activity. It is best to return to exercise gradually.
10. Eat healthy foods. Eat high-quality foods regularly. Fish, colorful fruits and vegetables, milk, eggs, whole grain breads, nuts and beans all help to keep the brain and body healthy.
11. Allow extra time for tasks. Understand that certain things may take longer than they used to, and allow extra time to complete those tasks. Break tasks down into smaller steps if necessary.



## TRACK YOUR MEMORY PROBLEMS WITH A JOURNAL

A journal like the one below will help you track the things that you forget and figure out what might be adding to your forgetfulness. Writing down what works and what doesn't will help you design a system that works for you.

| WHAT HAPPENED?                                    | WHY DO YOU THINK IT HAPPENED?                        | WHAT STRATEGY CAN YOU USE IN THE FUTURE?   | DID YOUR NEW STRATEGY WORK? |
|---|--|--|-----------------------------|
| <i>*I walked out of my house without my keys.</i> | <i>I was rushed and thinking about other things.</i> | <i>Put a sign on my door to remind me to slow down and make sure I have everything I need for the day.</i> | <i>Yes!</i>                 |
|   |  |  |                             |
|   |  |  |                             |
|   |  |  |                             |
|   |  |  |                             |
|   |  |  |                             |

\* Examples of answers are provided in the first row.