

# Simple Ways Improve Your Memory with Daily Activities

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A common for many older adults is memory loss. Considering in 2015 approximately 46.8 million people worldwide were living with dementia (Alzheimer's Disease International, n.d.), most people have known someone in their lifetime that struggled with memory decline.

Although it is important to note that there are many contributing risk factors, both controllable and non-controllable, to the development of

memory loss, there are many simple ways you can improve and maintain your brain health in your everyday routine.



A frequent belief I hear is the notion that in order to improve or maintain your memory you need to dedicate a certain amount of time per week partaking in “mind activities,” such as Sudoku, word searches, and crossword puzzles.

Let me first start off with a disclaimer that I have nothing against those activities. They are indeed a great way to promote your brain health, and if those are activities you love, I encourage you to continue to participate in them.

However, as an occupational therapist I would not encourage my clients to engage in those activities solely for the purpose of

improving processing skills if they did not enjoy them . My job is to help my clients find ways to promote wellness and quality of life in the daily activities that are individualized and meaningful to them.

There is a term we utilize in the occupational therapy world that is called “functional cognition.” Functional cognition is defined by the use of one’s thinking and processing skills in everyday activities.

We are constantly utilizing one’s memory and processing skills without realizing it during our daily routine. By being aware of this information and with a little intentionality you have the power to transform your activities/hobbies to challenge your mind and support your brain health.

Some examples of this include:

- \* For cooking, try a new recipe and when at the grocery store attempt to gather as many items from memory as possible prior to referring to the list

- \* For sewing, knitting, or woodworking, attempt a new pattern

- \* For gardening, plant and learn how to care for a different type of plant
  
- \* For sports fans, memorize player statistics from your favorite team
  
- \* For avid readers, converse with someone about key facts/information you gathered from your novel or newspaper
  
- \* For spirituality, memorize favorite scripture verses
  
- \* For writing, keep a memory journal or write your life memoir
  
- \* For board game lovers, play a game involving trivia or attempt a puzzle
  
- \* Engage in social activities to ponder new ideas and opinions
  
- \* Volunteer for a cause you are passionate about
  
- \* Take a class at the local community college or recreational center
  
- \* Try a new activity entirely, for learning a novel task requires significant brain power and processing skills

This is not an exhaustive list, but in summary, a key component to maintaining your brain health is to stimulate it through the engagement of meaningful, challenging activities. With this, it is important to note physical activity and a healthy lifestyle are also essential factors to not only support your physical health, but brain health as well. Physical activity does not have to encompass purely exercising but it can include housekeeping, gardening, or mechanical work.

So with this I challenge you to take a moment to reflect on your favorite hobbies/activities and determine ways you can take on a new challenge within those tasks to learn and stimulate your brain.

For more information on the promotion of memory I encourage you to refer to the following articles from the CDC and NIH:

*Healthy Body, Healthy Brain*

<https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/healthy-body-brain.html>

*Are you Engaged?*

<https://www.cdc.gov/features/social-engagement-aging/index.html>

## *Cognitive Health and Older Adults*

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/cognitive-health-and-older-adults>

For more information on exercises, physical activity, and quality of life

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**Have the Strength to Live Life to the Fullest!**

Source:

Alzheimer's Disease International. (n.d.) *Dementia statistics*. Alzheimer's Disease International. Retrieved from: <https://www.alz.co.uk/research/statistics>