

Attention and Concentration Strategies

- Avoid demanding tasks when you are fatigued (i.e. checkbook balancing and budget planning). When you begin to feel frustrated or overwhelmed, take a break from the task and return to it later when you are refreshed.
- When you notice that you're losing your attention or focus on the task (daydreaming), ask yourself, "What is my task now? What do I need to do next?" This will help draw you to the task at hand.
- Use self-talk. Talk yourself through the steps while completing tasks. You may eventually be able to do this mentally, but when you begin practicing this technique, try talking out loud and gradually fading to a whisper. Then you can work up to being able to do it mentally.
- Your ability to concentrate may fluctuate over time. Recognize when you are beginning to get tired and give yourself a break.
- When given lengthy instructions to follow, break down the information into simple, step-by-step tasks. You may want to write down each step needed to complete the task or carry a pocket tape recorder/smart phone and record the information to help you recall.
- Eliminate distractions in the environment when you are doing something that requires concentration (TV, radio, conversation or activities outside a window). Move to a quiet room and shut the door and/or window coverings to assist with eliminating distractions.
- Complete one task at a time. Do not try to do too many things at once. After you have completed one task, then start on the next one.
- Break important tasks/projects down into small and achievable steps.
- SLOW DOWN. Give yourself plenty of time to complete activities or tasks. You may not always process information as fast as you once did.
- Always re-read directions before beginning a task. Take your time when completing tasks. Double-check all of your work, or have someone else do it.
- Be sure to plan and organize your activity before completing it.
 - Plan and organize a grocery list before shopping.
 - Gather and organize items you need for cooking before preparing the meal.
 - Generate specific questions you need to ask when obtaining information.

- Always keep your brain busy and stimulate thinking by completing tasks at home including board games, card games, crossword puzzles, mazes, word finds, jigsaw puzzles and reading books. Even watching TV shows like "Wheel of Fortune" and guessing the puzzle is good practice.
- Ease into your routine slowly. Your brain and body are continuing to heal, so don't over-do it. Begin with a few tasks a day and gradually increase activity as you are able. Be sure you seek out the doctor's approval before driving or attending work.
- Use organized visual scanning strategies versus random scanning.
- Use highlighters, underlining, stars, etc. to call attention to written information.
- Use a "cover sheet" for focusing attention while reading.
- While reading, attend to any headlines or headings to alert you to the topic. If there are any study questions after the reading material, read them BEFORE you read the material to alert you what to look for while reading. Otherwise, look for the "wh" facts (who, what, when, where, why) while reading and make a mental note of these facts.
- Write a one sentence summary next to each paragraph while reading. This will also aid a quick review of what you have read previously if you have forgotten the information.