

NEUROTALK

CLIENT INFORMATION SERIES

Cognitive-Communication Strategies

Practical ways to support attention, memory, and organisation.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Cognitive-communication difficulties affect the thinking skills that support communication — attention, memory, organisation, and problem-solving. They're common after a stroke or brain injury, and can also occur with some neurological conditions. You might find it harder to follow conversations, stay on topic, remember what was said, or organise your thoughts before speaking. These skills work together, so when one is under pressure, communication can feel harder even though your language itself hasn't changed.

These difficulties vary from person to person. They can affect communication even when language skills are relatively unchanged. Some people also experience changes in language, such as difficulties finding words or understanding what others say.

STRATEGIES TO TRY

1 Use a notebook or app

Write down important information, appointments, questions and tasks. Use a diary, phone calendar, notes app or reminders — whichever works best for you. Check your chosen system regularly.

2 Break tasks into steps

Large or complex tasks can feel overwhelming. Break them into smaller steps and work through them one at a time. A written checklist can help you keep track of your progress.

3 Reduce distractions

When you need to concentrate or have an important conversation, try turning off the TV, reducing background noise or moving somewhere quieter. Notice which environments make communication easier for you.

4 One thing at a time

Multitasking can make it harder to follow information and organise your thoughts. When possible, focus on one conversation or task before moving on to the next.

5 Build routines & checklists

Regular routines can reduce the amount you need to remember and plan each day. Keep useful reminders and checklists somewhere easy to see and access.

6 Pause, summarise & check back

Take a moment to organise your thoughts or summarise the key points of a conversation. You could write down the main message or confirm the next steps with the other person to make sure you are both on the same page.

FOR COMMUNICATION PARTNERS

Small changes to the way you communicate can make a meaningful difference.

- Share information in manageable amounts. Give one instruction or a few key points at a time, allowing the person to ask questions.
- Allow time to process and respond. Give the person time to understand what has been said and organise their response without rushing or finishing their sentences.
- Reduce distractions. Choose a quieter environment for important conversations and try to have one person speak at a time.

- Use written supports when helpful. Write down appointments, important details or agreed next steps, and check that the format suits the person's needs.
- Check understanding together. Ask whether anything needs clarifying, or summarise the key points and invite the person to correct or add to them.
- Work with the person's preferences. Ask which strategies help and encourage independence by allowing the person to use their own strategies wherever possible.

Everyone's communication needs are different. Try the strategies that work best for you and use them in everyday situations that matter to you. A speech pathologist can help identify which strategies are most useful for your communication goals and how to put them into practice.

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