**Compensation Techniques**

Compensation refers to the idea of using tools to “work around” or “compensate” for a deficit. A wheelchair doesn’t change your ability to walk, but it does enable you to get where you want to go. In the same way these compensation techniques won’t make your attention or memory better, but they will enable you to get things done.

*ATTENTION*

* Work in a quiet room/Limit distractions
  + Unnecessary sensory information (sounds, sights, smells) can make focusing on one task more difficult. Creating or finding a quiet undecorated room can help eliminate some of these distractions. You might try your local library or community center if you don’t have a room at home you can use.
* Focus on one task at a time
  + It is easier to focus on one task, at first, rather than jump from one to another or do multiple tasks at once. Start simple to sustain attention and work on one task until it is completed before starting on another task.
* Avoid crowds
  + Crowds can cause distractions in many sensory forms (visual, auditory, etc.), which can impair attention ability. Try to stay away from large groups of people if your attention needs to be focused.
* Limit fatigue
  + Listen to your body. If you start to feel fatigued by focusing or training your attention too hard, take breaks until you feel you can try again. Some signs of fatigue include feeling tired, increased symptoms like headache, feeling irritable, or slow reflexes or responses.
* Avoid interruptions
  + Disruptions can make staying focused and sustaining you attention difficult, try to avoid being around interruptions if you are trying to focus on something. For example, work in a quiet room with the door closed, turn off your cell phone, turn off notifications if you are working on a computer.
* Move to a closer or more direct position
  + If you are listening to a lecture or participating in a meeting, being up close can help limit potential distractions and keep you engaged with the task at hand.
* Use electronic organizers
  + Electronic organizers that come with computers, phones, and tablets, or stand-alone options, like calendars or notes can help remind you of tasks so that you do not need to keep attention on remembering certain events or things to do. This way, more of you attention can be focused on a single task.
* Use spell checkers, grammar programs
  + It is easy to be distracted by checking spelling or grammar when writing so built in trackers can help do the job for you so you can keep your energy on attending to the writing.
* Tape record important information
  + Having a recording is a reliable way to make sure you have the information you need in the event you could not sustain attention on what was being said or needs to be remembered.
* Use cueing devices
  + Devices like calendars or reminders can help remind you of events so that your attention can be brought to them in the event your attention is otherwise being used. This can include an alarm at the time that something needs to be done, or just a simple alarm set every ten minutes to remind you to pay attention.
* Get notes from peers in the classroom
  + If you have issues sustaining attention throughout a class, ask classmates to help you fill in the gaps in your notes.
* - Play brain games
  + - many phone apps or computer games/websites games to aid in everyday attention and memory. Don’t spend a lot of money, though, there are some great free alternatives. Check out the AARP website for an example.

*Memory*

External devices. This refers to any method of remembering that is outside of you and your brain. Here are some examples of ways to use external reminders.

Use a notebook or diary:

* Writing things down won’t make your memory better, but it will help you get things done. Keep your notes in one place, like a bound notebook, to avoid losing many little pieces of paper.
* You can make different sections for better organization. For example, “Things I have to do, What I did today, Phone numbers and Addresses, Feelings, Ideas, Meal Log, What to do in an emergency, What happened to me”. Try to link looking in your notebook to things you do each day, like whenever you eat a meal, check your notebook!
* And remember, learning to use your notebook requires memory, too, so give it practice and time! Some people forget to use it. Some people feel too dependent on their journal or notebook. Also, there is a risk of losing all of your reminders if the notebook is lost. Try keeping it in the same spot everyday to avoid losing it. If these drawbacks are affecting you, you might consider using internal strategies instead.

Use an electronic device:

* Using a device is a lot like using a notebook. This method may be more convenient for people who always have their phone or tablet with them. Also, electronic devices can send you alerts when it is time to do a task, which is really helpful!
* There are special applications you can use that are made to help you remember. It is a good idea to use apps like google calendar or iCalendar so that your reminders can be accessed from multiple devices. There are also services that call or text you to help you complete your tasks.
* Use devices like key finder, vehicle locator, tape recording devices
* Even though these devices are great, some people feel too dependent on them. It can also be stressful to receive notifications all the time. There is also a risk of losing access to your information if the internet is down, the device’s battery dies, or if the device breaks, is stolen, or lost. If using an electronic device is too much for you, don’t worry because there are still other ways to complete your daily tasks!

Change the environment:

* + Color code materials that belong together
  + Use a timer if you forget the time you’re supposed to eat.
  + If you often forget what you need to bring with you, place it in front of the door the night before, so you have to trip over it to leave without it.
  + If you have specific tasks to do each day, like homework, set aside an hour that is only for that task and do it the same time every day.
  + Post a calendar in an obvious place you can’t miss to track dates
  + Use sticky notes to write notes for yourself and place them on objects you are exposed to daily.
  + Stay organized and put things back in the same place they are regularly found. For example, keep your keys on the hook by the door.
  + Make a schedule for the times at which you will accomplish a list of tasks.

Internal strategies:

Mnemonics:

* These are acronyms or words associated with the idea you want to remember, They help make a complex idea simple. For example, Roy G. Biv is a name used to remember the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.

Visual Imagery memory:

* + This technique involves constructing mental images when learning new information in order to be able to better recall the information later. For example, when attempting to remember a list of groceries that need to be bought in the future, picture your kitchen or the supermarket. Create a mental image of different groceries in the kitchen or the supermarket in order to be able to better recall what is needed. If an individual needed to remember to buy ice cream, they can create a mental image of the freezer wide open with a pint of the desired ice cream. The richer the image the better, so think about how cold the freezer is, what you might hear when the door is open, any smell that you might associate with ice cream.

PQRST for reading comprehension:

* + This stands for preview, question, read, state, test.
  + First, you preview/skim the reading material in order to understand generally what it is about. Next, generate a list of questions that you would like to answer by the end of the reading. Afterwords, read the materials carefully. Then state in your own words what happened and test your knowledge! Lastly, if you cannot remember something, look back at the text.

Make associations:

* + Relate new experiences and information with what is already known. Using information your brain has already stored can help in learning new information because rather than trying to learn something completely new, you can draw on already existing knowledge. For example, if you want to remember where your doctor’s office is, think about what building it is next to, the neighborhood, and any other places you know nearby.

Repetition, repetition, repetition:

* + The way the brain knows something is important to remember is through repetition, so the more times you repeat something, the better your chance of remembering it. And remember, it is better to practice or study one hour per day for seven days than to practice for seven hours on the same day. Your brain needs time in between to store what you learned.
  + Don’t rush and relax in order to stay focused and concentrated on the task at hand. This will allow for better recall in the future.

*EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS*

* Do one thing at a time/Planning and Prioritizing

There is really no such thing as multitasking. Make sure to do one thing at a time and to plan ahead the order that you will get things done.

- Break a large task into small parts

-To break down a large task, write down all action steps you can think of for each project and complete them one by one. This will help avoid stress and procrastination.

- Keep home and workspace organized

- Segment and organize your work zones at work and home. For example, place papers in the same place each time you are done with them and be sure there is a logic to where they are stored. Try to remove distracting objects on your work surface.

* Label things in the environment

-This enhances the nature of where and when to work via home and working space to avoid stress and multitasking. Set reminders and labels (sticky notes) to divide specific tasks at home and at work into sections to prevent stressful environment. You might use colored sticky notes to indicate which items go together in a project or to label which items are the biggest priority.

* Self-monitoring

-Check in from time to time on your priority tasks and what you have accomplished. Congratulate yourself on your successes and be sure that you are aware of your most common challenges.

* Learn tasks

-Learn specific routines and complete them the same way every time. For example, when making a salad you might do each ingredient in the same order and prepared in the same way each time. This will make it a habit and eliminate some of the cognitive control needed to get it done.

* Learn metacognitive strategies

-This learning strategies help you understand the way you learn. Examples of metacognitive activities include planning how to approach a learning task, using appropriate skills and strategies to solve problems, monitoring one’s own comprehension of text, self-assessing and self-correcting in response to the self-assessment.

* Use project management online tools

-These online tools are designed to plan, execute and control all aspects of project management processes. For example, this tool can be used to calculate the amount of realistic time it will take to finish a project, time to balance workload for optimal time (time management), enhances scheduling and planning, an organizational platform for various activities at hand.