

Managing Post COVID-19 Condition Therapeutic Education Program

Cognitive-Communication Staying in the Conversation

Session Plan

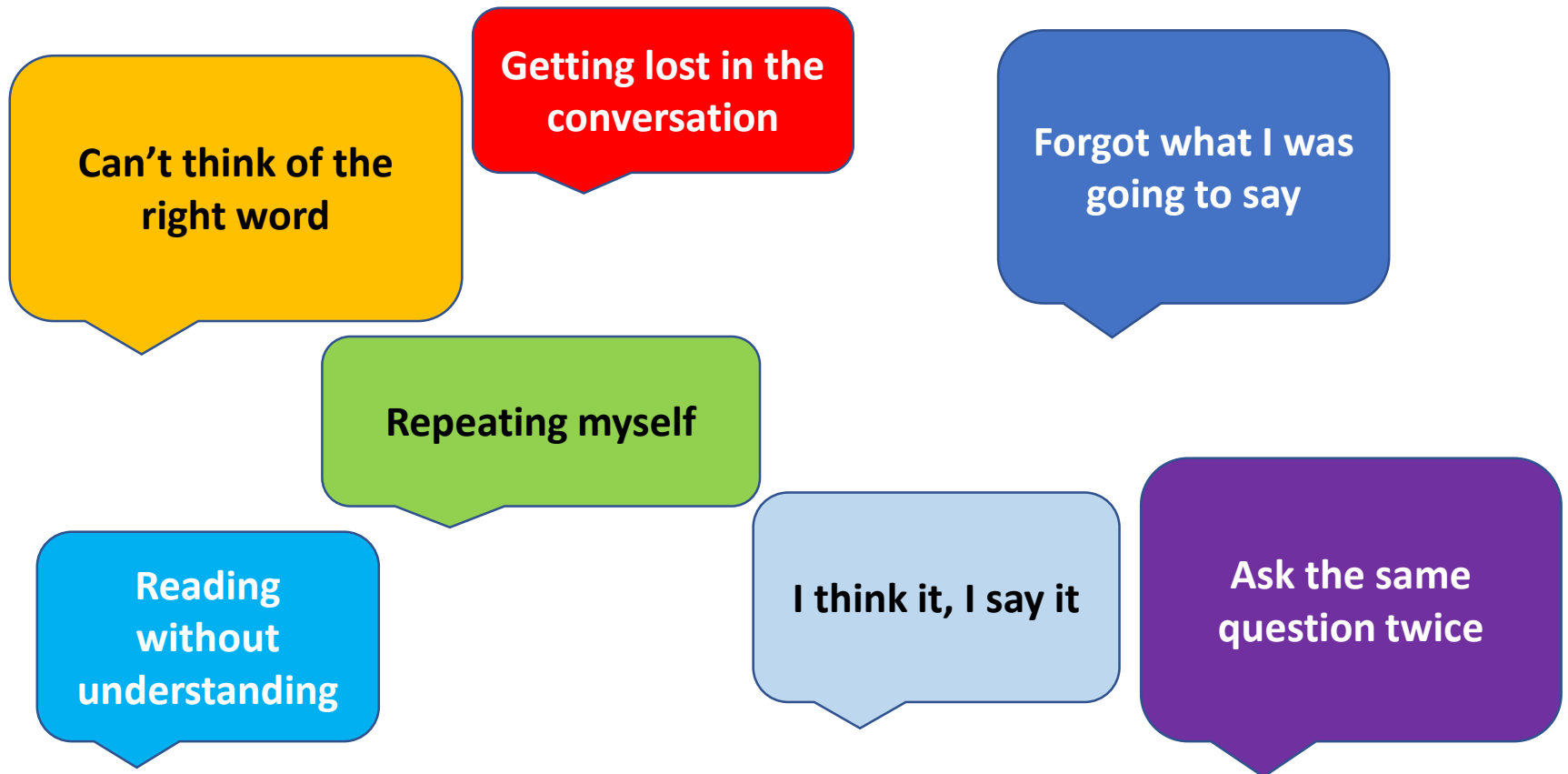
Cognitive-Communication Skills



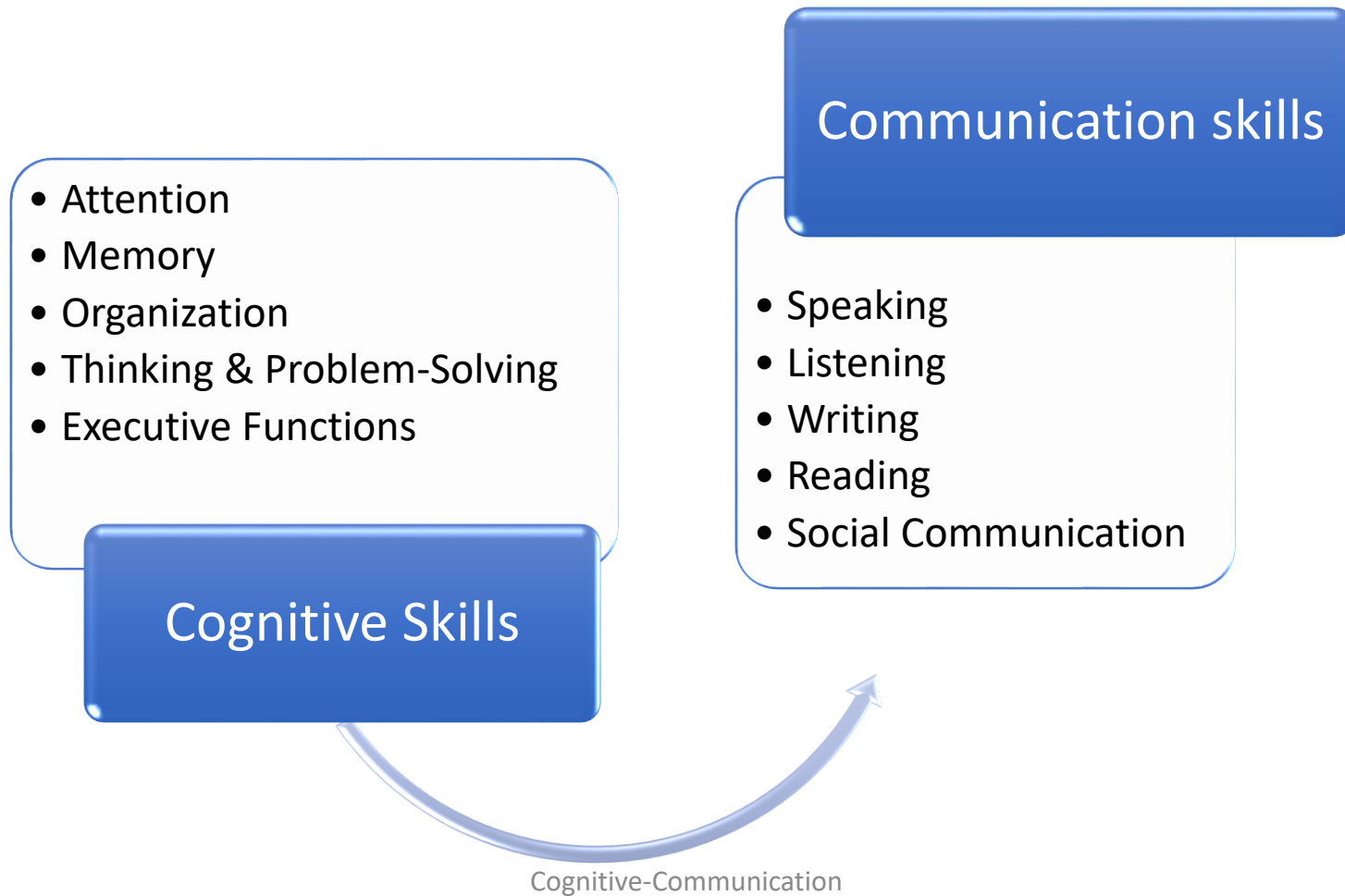
Communication Strategies:

- Speaking
- Listening
- Reading
- Writing
- Social Communication

What are we talking about?



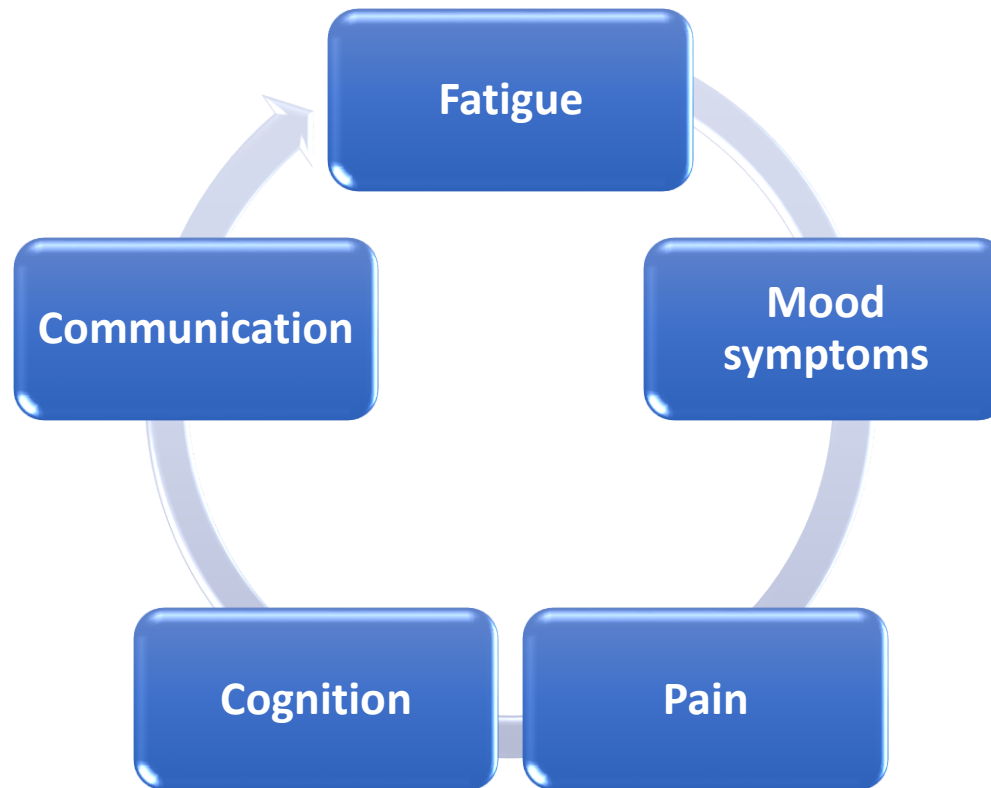
Cognitive-Communication Skills



Everyday errors (but maybe every hour)



Multiple interacting factors



Cognitive-Communication

Communication Skills

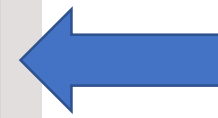
Input

Output

Listening



Reading



Speaking



Writing

Social Communication

Don't forget the basics

- Vision
 - optometry
 - neuro-optometry
- Hearing
 - audiology
 - tinnitus resources

Communication Strategies: What can you do?

Use what we know about common experiences of Long COVID, and what we know about attention, memory and learning to identify communication strategies that

- Limit cognitive exertion
- Reduce errors
- Support participation

Energy conservation strategies for communication

What do you do when your cell phone doesn't fully charge?

Stop to charge frequently, plan your day

➔ **Cognitive pacing and planning**

Dim the screen, avoid apps that need video

➔ **Change the activity to make it take less energy**

Offload to the laptop, someone else's phone

➔ **Externalize everything you can**



Strategies for communication: plan and pace

- Plan communication-loaded activities the way you would a trip to the mall:
wedding, meeting, call with insurer,
family conversation, reading, taxes)



Strategies for communication: plan and pace

- Time of day: When are you at your best?
- “Macro” level pacing – buffer the activity; budget appropriately
- “Micro” level pacing – breaks *within* the activity: timer, ally
- Stick to your plan (even if you feel ok)
- Attend the important part



Strategies for communication: environment

- Eliminate distractions (digital, human, internal)



- Find the calmest port in any storm: Take communication to a quiet place



- Reduce the physical load: sit down, lie down, close your eyes



Strategies for communication: Allies

Ask for **help**

- running interference
- reminding you of breaks or plans to leave
- finding you a quiet spot
- being a scribe (insurance form, birthday card)

Educate your people about attention, memory

Speaking – what can go wrong?

Family dinner, meeting, presentation, phone call

- Slow word retrieval, problems thinking of a word
- Difficulty organizing thoughts into words
- Pauses, ums & uhs, empty words (“thing” “stuff”)
- Revisions, back-tracking
- Forgetting what you were going to say
- Repeating yourself
- Getting off topic

Strategies for speaking:

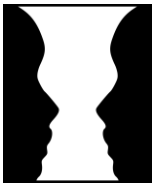
Reduce attention & memory load

- Prepare: make notes, sketch an outline, write down key words (even for a family conversation or a regular meeting)
- Terminology list or attendee names in view
- Rehearse ahead of time
- Use an outline, notes, power point



Strategies for speaking:

Slow down, insert a thoughtful pause

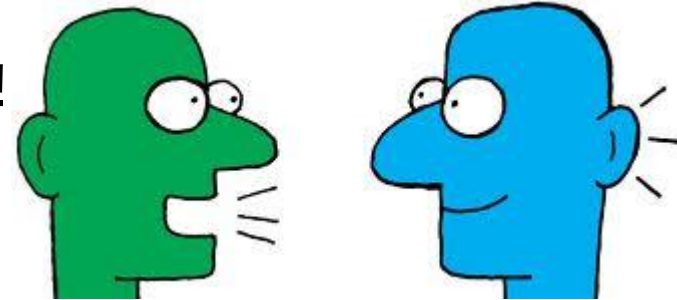


Reframe: *You're choosing your words deliberately and with care*

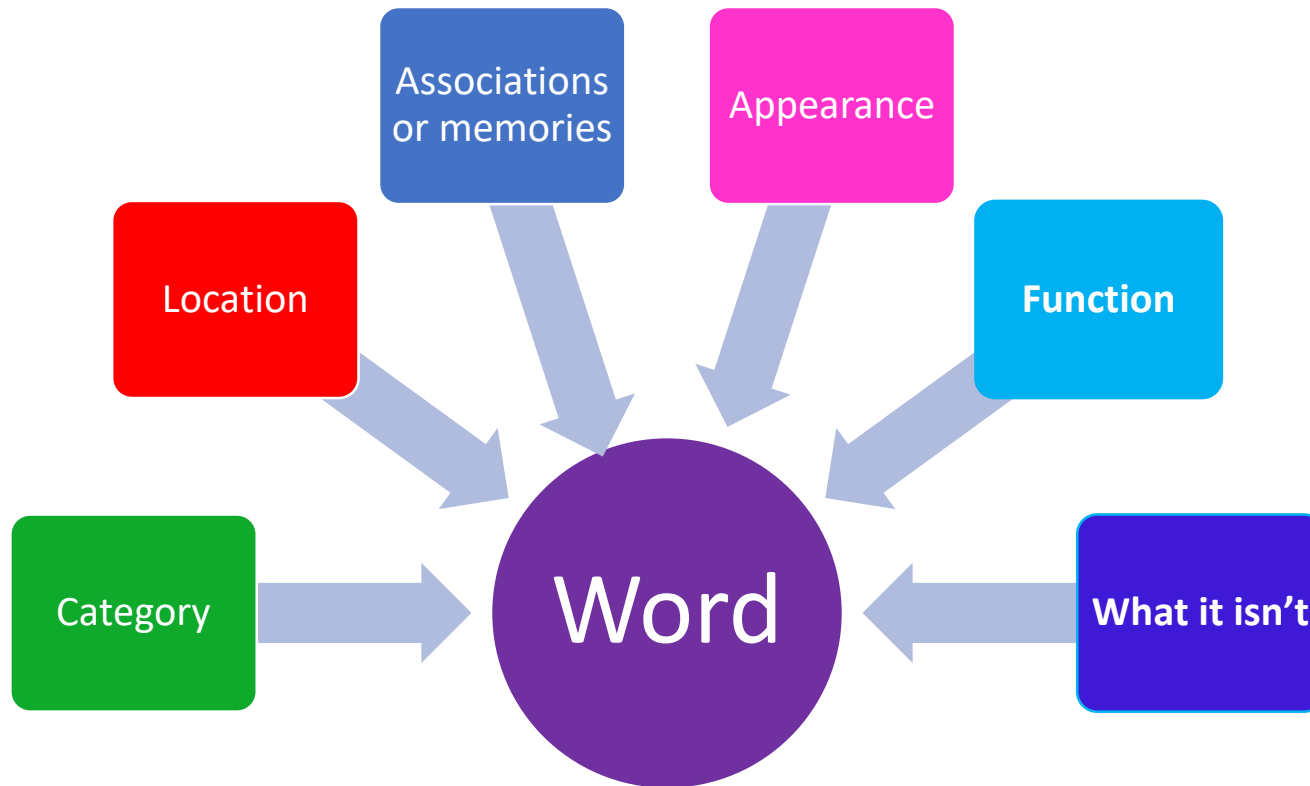


When you can't think of a word...

- The goal is to get your message across!
- Use a synonym
- Or the opposite
- Define it
- Talk around it (circumlocution) until one of you thinks of the word: keep your listener engaged instead of waiting



Word-finding problems - Circumlocution



Circumlocution

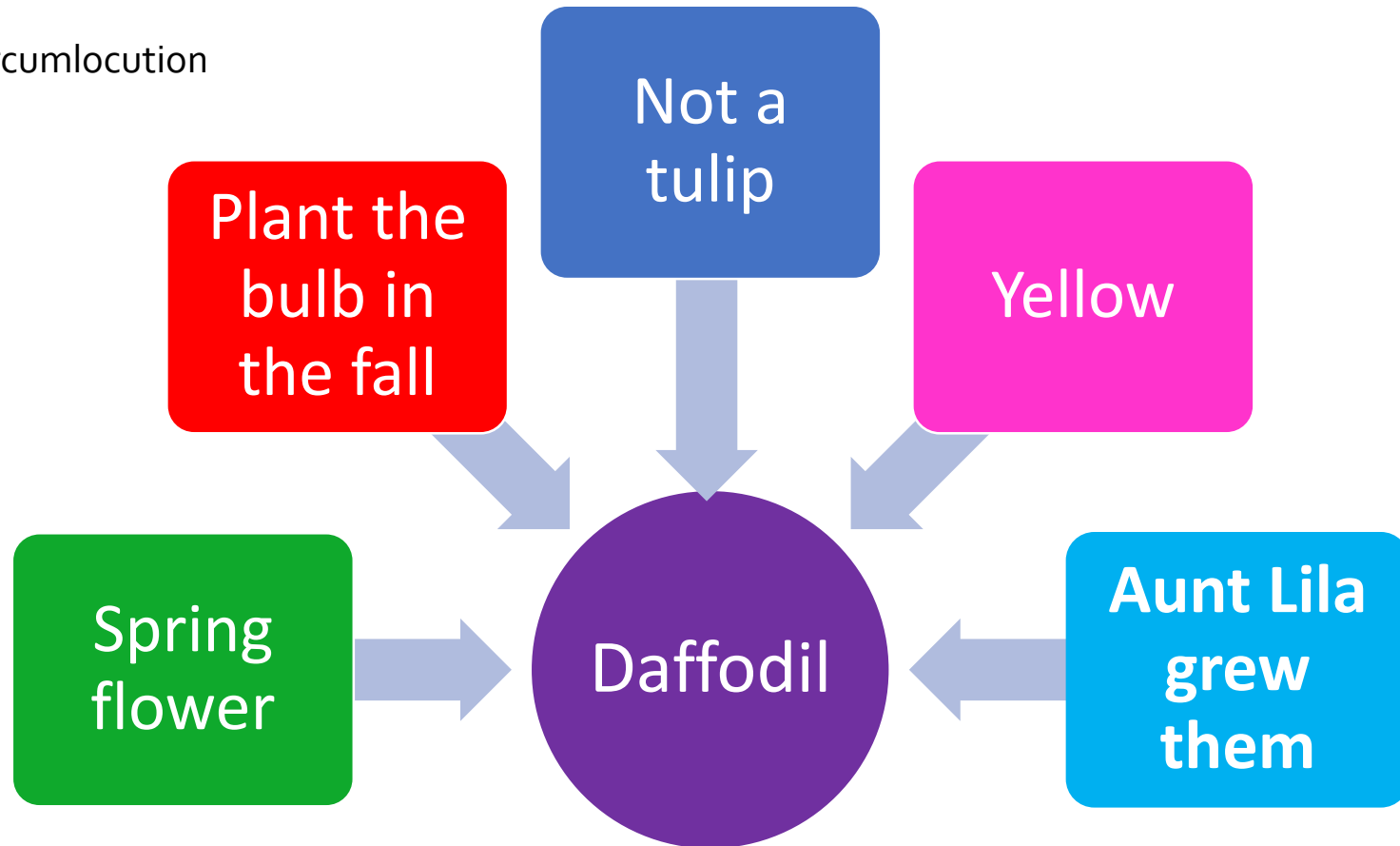
Circumlocution can help you think of the word:

Spreading activation of the network of connections between words until you think of the word (now or later)



Word-finding problems - Circumlocution

Circumlocution



Word-finding problems: Circumlocution

If you can't think of the word:

Cantaloupe

Circumlocution: a fruit, a melon that's brown and bumpy on the outside and orange on the inside

Moose

Circumlocution: A huge Canadian animal, antlers, not an elk, I think maybe it starts with m?

Flabbergasted

Synonym: Taken aback; shocked; horrified

Word-finding problems: Circumlocution

If you can't think of the word:

Definition: when a parent or teacher is very rigid and cross with kids

Stern

Antonym: Not a professional; Association: Olympic athletes

Amateur

Circumlocution: singer, Put A Ring On It, one name, super famous

Beyoncé

Word-finding problems: Circumlocution

If you can't think of the word:

Grateful

Lasagne

Chronic

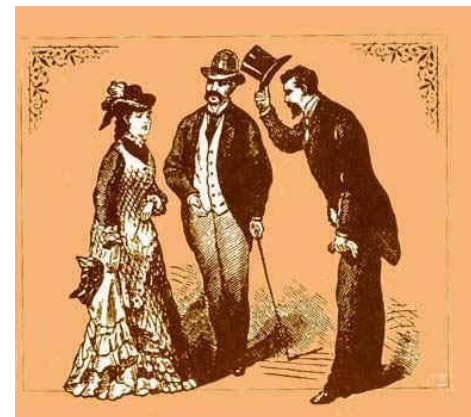
Golden Retriever

Principal

Heartburn

Names: a special case

- If you're on the spot: social graces and tricks!
 - Introduce the person you're with
 - Ally swoops in!
 - Confess and apologize: "I am terrible with names"
 - If you remember everything else about them – make that clear so they know they're not forgettable



Word-finding: Names

- Keep a running list of names you tend to forget, with helpful details
- Do some preparation before the gathering or meeting
- Prevention: use learning strategies like rehearsal and self-testing to learn names deliberately

Listening: What can go wrong?

Family dinner, TV, meeting, lecture, podcast

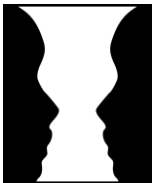
- Losing focus while someone is speaking
- Forgetting a conversation, not following through
- Misunderstanding, not “reading between the lines”
- Problems following something long, fast or abstract
- Difficulty in groups or in background noise

Listening Strategies: ask for repetition



Ask for what you missed vs. hope for the best

- The whole thing: I'm sorry, could you say that again?
- Be efficient by asking just for the specific missing piece: Tell me again, what was the name of the process?



Reframe: I'm interested in what you are saying

Listening Strategies: Active listening

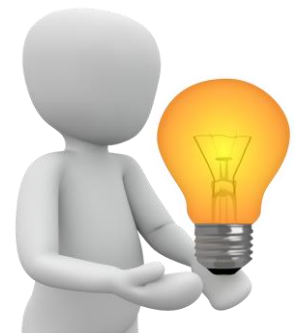
Active listening vs. “just listening”

“Do something” to help you pay attention and make sure you actually *process* the information

- Ask a question
- Repeat back the key information
- Paraphrase
- Confirm the main idea or a detail
- ***Engagement***



Cognitive-Communication



Listening Strategies: Use your social skills

- Use **social conversation skills** to slow the conversation down, get something repeated:
 - Huh, so interesting, tell me more
 - Can you give me an example?
 - Can you put that another way?
 - This is important, I just want to get it on paper
 - And what do you think about that, Gavin?



Reading Comprehension: What can go wrong?

Texts, emails, articles, webpages, books

- Having to reread multiple times to understand
- Getting to the bottom of the page without taking anything in
- Not remembering what you read
- Tired after reading for a few minutes

Reading Strategies: physical considerations

- Screen characteristics
 - Dark mode
 - Turn down screen brightness
 - Large screen vs. small
 - Larger font
 - Reformat into two columns
 - Blue light filters
 - Side-lit e-reader
- Consider printing
- Audiobooks; podcasts; audio newspaper stories
- Screen reading apps



Reading Strategies: Guard your attention

- Protected time and space
 - Phone, Slack, Teams on *Do not disturb*
 - Headphones
 - Put habit-forming apps on your third “page”
- Remember your cognitive pacing strategies
 - Scheduled **(true)** breaks
Not social media or dishes!

Breathe
Breathe

Reading Strategies: Content

- Quantity:
 - Summary or abstract
 - Short stories
 - Poetry
- Familiarity: a book you've read before
- Difficulty: Young adult; beach read
- Emotional load: intense, dark, twisty has an energy cost
 - Not just books: I'm looking at you, Twitter...



Reading Strategies: Comprehension & Retention

- Slow down
- Active processing
 - Read aloud
 - Paraphrase – aloud, in your head, on paper
 - Take notes
 - Write down character names, family tree
 - Sticky note summary where you left off
- If you need to remember: Formal study strategy like SQ3R



Written expression: What can go wrong?

Texting, emails, essays, reports

- Word-finding problems
- Spelling mistakes, missing words
- Problems putting thoughts into words
- Disorganized, unconnected
- No flow

Writing Strategies:

- As with reading: protected time, modify screens
- Change the modality: dictate texts, notes, emails
- Work from a plan: return to your roots
 - Report formats
 - Formal essay outlines
- Re-use & recycle! Revise rather than recreate



Writing Strategies:

Edit in stages:

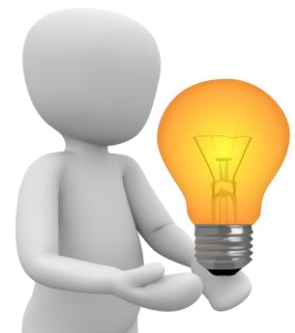
Meaning and message

Grammar

Spelling

Come back to your work later

Get a second opinion



Social Communication: What can go wrong?

Hinting, staying on topic, reading the room

- Blurting out something hurtful, too blunt
- Missing the humour or sarcasm or hint
- Trouble thinking of things to say
- Repeating yourself
- Tangents

Social Communication Strategies

Schedule and plan serious conversations

(less blurting = less damage)

Support memory & attention

- Less likely to interrupt
- Resources left to watch faces, body language

Educate your people

- Effects of fatigue on your self-monitoring
- Let you know in time to repair
- “If it’s not in writing you didn’t tell me”

