



# FACT SHEET

## *Brain Injury & Working Memory Skills*

*Do you have trouble holding information in mind for reasoning and learning since your brain injury?*

### What does this mean?

Working memory involves the ability to hold information in your mind and to keep it there long enough to perform some operation or to manipulate it in some way. Most tasks of everyday functioning involve an aspect of working memory abilities.

### How might a brain injury affect working memory skills?

Working memory skills are needed when we must mentally recall, manipulate, and transform information. A number of problems can cause difficulty with working memory, including anxiety and/or impaired memory storage ability that result from a brain injury.

### Common examples of working memory problems:

- ◆ Unable to repeat a series of numbers backward.
- ◆ Unable to hold on to information long enough to use it.
- ◆ Struggle to concentrate in order to follow instructions.
- ◆ Notice difficulties in many different subject areas, mainly reading and math.

### Recommended strategies:

Identify specific working memory impairments through comprehensive neuropsychological testing/assessment. If diagnosed with working memory impairment, there are different strategies that can be taken:

- ◆ Know your limitations, anticipate problems and plan ahead in case you run into trouble.
- ◆ Get rid of distractions.
- ◆ Guide yourself through tasks by giving yourself instructions while engaged in the task.
- ◆ Practice and rehearse what is needed beforehand.
- ◆ Pace yourself. Go slow if needed.
- ◆ Write information down to help keep it straight while working with it.
- ◆ Check to see how well you are doing and ask for feedback.
- ◆ Change your approach if it doesn't seem to be working.

**Source:** Intervention of Short-Term and Working Memory Impairments in Closed-Head Injury: A Literature Review, Irene H. Kim, Craig Hospital, Englewood, CO. Further, the information in this FACT SHEET is also based on a consensus of expert opinion of the Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana Departments of Neuropsychology and Resource Facilitation.

**Disclaimer:** This information is not meant to replace advice from a medical professional. You should consult your health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatments.

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