Slide 1

HOW IS IT SUPPOSED TO WORK
HOW IT CAN GO WRONG
WHAT DO YOU DO ABOUT IT

MEMORY

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Slide 2

Introduction

Memory problems are reported in anywhere from 21-80% of patients with lupus
- “brain fog”
- “lupus fog”
- Depression and fatigue are also quite frequent

Slide 3

Lupus

Depression & Fatigue

Memory problems
Slide 4

Your brain processes ALL incoming information. Encoding what you can consciously hold on to and work with. Storage must be stored permanently for later recall. Retrieval to remember later, have to take it out of storage.

FILTER
frontal lobes
temporal lobes

Slide 5

How memory works

Encoding
- how well you store something and retrieve it later depends on how well you encoded it
- requires
  ▸ attention
  ▸ working memory
  ▸ limited capacity

ENCODING STORAGE RETRIEVAL

Slide 6

How memory works

incoming information
filter
storage
good attentional capacity
Slide 7

How memory works

- incoming information
- storage
- filter
- reduced attentional capacity

Slide 8

Retrieval

- information is easier to retrieve if it was encoded better
- also requires attention

Slide 9

What can affect memory?

- anxiety
- depression
- fatigue
- poor sleep
- frustration
- pain
- multitasking
- age
Strategies to enhance memory

- Pay attention!!
  - you can't remember something if you never learned it
  - you can't learn something if you don't pay enough attention to it
- don't multitask
- minimize distractions
- focus!

Strategies to enhance memory

- Play to your strengths
  - auditory/verbal learners: learn best by listening or using a verbal strategy  
    e.g., acronym
    - bread
    - rice
    - eggs
    - milk
    - BREM
  - visual learners: learn best by reading or seeing or using a spatial strategy  
    e.g., a pin number
    - 1 2 3
    - 4 5 6
    - 7 8 9
    - 0

Strategies to enhance memory

- chunk information: arrange a long list in smaller units or categories that are easier to remember
- rehearse information frequently and “overlearn”
  - review what you’ve learned the same day you learn it, and review it at intervals thereafter 
  - the recurrent exposure helps to solidify the memory
Strategies to enhance memory

• spaced retrieval
  ▸ your brain will only retain information you need
  ▸ if you never access something you learned, it can be deleted!
  ▷ e.g., some of the things you learned in school...
  ▸ try to retrieve the information at regular intervals
  ▷ this helps solidify the memory
  ▸ if it is not easily retrieved, study it again

Compensating for memory problems

• Organize information
  ▸ do not use post-its!
  ▷ except if they serve as a prompt to write information more permanently elsewhere
  ▸ write things down in a date book
  ▷ choose one that can be carried with you and has a section for phone numbers/addresses
  ▷ keep it in one central location so that you can always find it

Compensating for memory problems

• Organize yourself!
  ▸ get rid of clutter
  ▸ keep items you often lose in one standard place
  ▷ e.g., keys on a hook by the door
  ▸ establish a routine
  ▸ use a pill box for medications
Compensating for memory problems

- Make lists
  - itemize things to do
  - keep lists in a central location that can be referred to readily
    - maybe in your date book...
    - electronic options: G-Tasks
  - once the task is done, cross it off and put the date of completion

Brain healthy habits

- What’s good for the heart is good for the brain
  - heart-healthy diet
    - e.g., Mediterranean diet; MIND diet
    - physical exercise as permitted
  - Be cognitively active
    - the more information is used, the firmer the memory
  - Be socially active
    - helps with mood and helps exercise cognitive skills

Brain healthy habits

- Manage stress
  - the stress hormone, cortisol, can damage temporal lobe memory centers
  - acute stress interferes with attention/concentration
    - affects encoding and retrieval
- Maintain good sleep habits
  - sleep is necessary for formation of long-term memories
  - being sleepy causes attention problems
What can be done about it?

Closing advice

• Be motivated and keep a positive attitude
  ▸ if you say, “I have a bad memory”, you WILL have a bad memory!
  ▸ don’t give up
  ▸ don’t be overly critical of memory lapses
    ▸ emotional reaction to a retrieval problem will just make it worse

Services at Rush Department of Behavioral Sciences

• Neuropsychological services (312-942-2803)
  ▸ cognitive evaluation to determine nature and extent of memory problem
  ▸ interventions to help learn memory strategies and/or compensate for memory problems
    ▸ 312-942-2803

• Psychotherapy services (312-942-6973)
  ▸ sleep
  ▸ mood
  ▸ stress management
  ▸ adopting healthy behavior

THANK YOU!