

CogMed Memory Program Diary 2009

The author of this diary had spent a lifetime struggling with a poor memory, something that affected almost every aspect of her life. In a candid series of entries, she describes her impetus for taking the five week CogMed Memory Program and how it affected her before, during and after the program.

Entry #1: I took a book out of the library on improving my memory and three months later I had to pay \$30 for the book. Not only did I not remember where I put it, I don't even remember if I read it.

Entry #2: Today I start "Day One of Week One of Five Week Memory Program" – oops, forgot I was going on a school field trip...fly fishing with my son's school. So I have to do the program at night. Got a fishing hook cast into my head; maybe I can blame my bad performance with the program on that hook.

Entry #3: I agreed to the conditions of this program - one quiet hour a day – five days a week for five weeks with a weekly coaching phone call. I also say I am committed to a weekly reward that I have to plan and give to myself. Not so sure about the reward bit – we'll see.

In the preliminary stage after I signed up, I answered quite a few questions, mostly it seems, about whether I had a previous learning disability diagnosis or not. Seems like lots of questions about Attention Deficit Disorder. I was also asked what my memory problems are and what I hoped to get out of the program as well as cautioned not to start any new medication during the program (note: postponed trip to doctor for overdue blood pressure and cholesterol medicine – yeah – I liked this program already.)

I was asked to describe current memory problems and previous trouble in school (at first it's kind of hard to remember clearly things that happened forty years ago – but I do of course remember school seemed much harder for me than other kids and that I seemed to study longer and harder than most friends).

So I answered honestly, that probably like many kids with undiagnosed learning disabilities, I thought I was stupid a lot and school seemed pretty hard – I spent a lot of time in a fog and sensed that other students were not in the fog I was in.

Entry #4: When I was asked pointblank if I knew my IQ it touched a nerve. I notice how emotional I am when I tell the interviewer my #. I also notice that this time I almost believe that I am as smart as my IQ says.

I do not tell the interviewer that I have had a long and difficult relationship with my IQ. When you spend your first seven years of school in the slow group and suddenly get moved up on the first day of school to the smart class it's something you remember distinctly out of the fog even 38 years later.

Seems my school IQ tested us at the end of 7th grade and put us in 8th grade classes based on our IQs. I didn't really know what an IQ was back then but the class promotion did give me a sense of hope and my grades improved and my motivation went way up as my grades improved. I actually went to class when I could have been in assemblies. It took me a few years though to move from the "secretarial" tract to the "academic" tract so I never caught up in science or math. I got my M.B.A. without ever having taken calculus and when people talk about physics – well, I have no clue what physics is, and I never took chem lab either. It's part of that secret shame that lots of LD people have – that you are missing some shared knowledge that your peers have – only you never let on.

Do schools realize how undiagnosed learning disabilities stay with you your entire life?

That fog, missing knowledge, shame, confusion made me pay \$700 to go through two days of testing at Marshall University a year ago. I wanted to understand both what my mental abilities were and what my limitation were. Both my children have been diagnosed with learning disabilities and with my second one it is like peeling an onion – each LD reveals another one.

I figured my testing at Marshall (I was referred by a doctor friend who went there after failing her medical boards) might speed up the onion peeling with my youngest child since many LDs seem to have some hereditary basis. I can now say I have dyslexia, ADHD, an auditory problem (this service provider has a program for that) oh, and the tests on my memory – well they were the lowest of anything they tested for except the auditory – way lower than almost all other brain functions. I remember the examiner at Marshall telling me "imagine how high your IQ would have been if you hadn't scored so low on memory." I think that's what she said – I can't really remember.

Entry #5: My bad memory – how bad is it – like a series of stupid jokes only it's true. Like I can't remember who was President in what year. I find it hard to bring up points about a book I just read for book club because I can't pull the information out of my memory. But once someone else brings it up, I can easily remember and respond. It's like the information is in there, I just can't pull it out on my own. No one has ever said "you have a good memory" or "wow I can't believe you can remember that." I can see the big picture but can't remember normal things – like the date man landed on the moon or how long the American Revolution was. When I study a map of Africa I can remember the countries I study that day but a day later they are almost all gone – like I never memorized them at all – what's the point, it's a big ole waste of time – not to mention depressing, and did I mention embarrassing?

Entry #6: Back to the CogMed program. It takes less than two minutes to install the program yeah. But yikes... it takes over an hour to work out a bug in the system. Finally after going to ten or so computer forums on the internet I find a patch that I download

from a source "I don't trust" - and hey it works, at least once I get my husband to dumb down my visual card.

Finally at 8 o'clock at night I am on the program (with the fish hook holes fresh in my head). That's my excuse and I'm sticking to it.

I bought the teenager CogMed program with the robot instead of the adult program – heard from the owner of the service provider, Carol Utay, that the adult program is just too boring. I am easily bored and when the person selling you the program tells you it is too boring it must really be boring.

Day One or perhaps Night One – it's loud: two kids, two cats, night noise, curious husband... but I do the work anyhow figuring what difference does it make how I do the first time around?

The program exercises include remembering the sequence of lights and numbers and letters. What would you expect from a memory program – same old, same old except there is no strategy offered, at least not on Night One.

My son had a concussion last summer and the doctor, a genius doing cutting edge work in concussion recovery, confided that he had always had a memory problem and that strategy is important to improving your memory – like trying to remember things in blocks/groups or whisper the words or letters. I eagerly await the strategy hints to come.

I finish the program in less than a half an hour with no break. No surprises just try to remember what you saw in what order. At the end I am rewarded with a racing robot game. I lose to the other robot but get better each time – I'll beat the little metal cad soon. Definitely the RoboRacing game is the most engrossing part of the entire session – that's unfortunate.

Entry #7: Day Two: today I will follow the rules and take breaks – that's how I can do the laundry between sections.

A few things I notice the first week:

1. when I am distracted by my loud cats or just a thought like something to remember that day – well I can't remember the sequence I saw and I screw up
2. when I make a mistake the real answer is not too far off, maybe I said B and the answer was D or I pick the far left light but it was really one next to it
3. sometimes I really can't remember in my consciousness but then I get the sequence right like my brain had taken a picture of it and I can't see it or remember it but can somehow I can get my fingers to tap out the right answer – curious

The one thing that is hard and clear is that it's totally remarkable how paying attention does make a difference. Shocking in fact. Have I just assumed my memory was bad and stopped trying to remember? It's an odd feeling – I practice trying to remember and then I remember – at least sometimes this week I can remember better.

Another odd thing in this program is that I can't always figure out how many things I have to remember - when I know I have to remember four letters then I can do that a lot easier than when I can't figure out how many items I have to remember. "Are there two letters left to type in or just one." Design flaw? or did they intend you to not know, or is the answer obvious but I'm in a fog? Sometimes when they add another number to the sequence and I don't realize it and I screw up - I get an emotional hit and forget almost all the sequence - any mistake and it's wrong and I get moved into the next exercise.

If I have to remember six items in a sequence I remember them in two three blocks. Hey, I have a new strategy. Can't wait for the CogMed's strategies. They probably have lots of research on easier ways to remember to teach me.

Another thing I figure out in Week One is that any type of pattern makes it easy - if the numbers form some type of number sequence that I know like 168 is my old house number it's easier to remember, or if the sequence involves a repeat or the same number enveloping another 848 or 545 it makes it easier to remember and it sure makes that pattern easier to do backwards on the evil exercise where remembering is not good enough, you have to remember it all backwards.

Entry #8: I think this program is a bit hard. The questions keep getting harder until I answer wrong, then they drop the sequence number down and down until I get it right a few times then I go up again. I kind of bounce around doing good, good, better, yikes bad and I get demoted again - back to the dumb dumb class for me.

Oh, I also notice that when I screw up an easy one or can't even remember the first character I am more likely to screw up the next one or two. I have to take a break until I talk myself out of "a failure mode." Like failure breeds belief in failure and then you fail. I have to work on that.

Here's another thing I don't like about the program: someone somewhere, since this program is on-line, is watching how I am doing and that's not too comfortable of a feeling. I don't like it at all when my husband walks in the room when I am working. He has a near photographic memory - try living with that when you have the bad memory.

It just reminds me again what a dumb dumb I am about remembering things and I feel bad when I do this program.

Entry #9: On to more pleasant thought - my benchmarks:

During the initial phone conversation I was asked to come up with some benchmarks that would tell me that the program has worked. I'm a business person and this is exciting to me. When a service provider builds in a success measure - well that makes the investment seem much more legitimate. And when I get to choose my own benchmarks well that's pretty good customer responsiveness. I am quite impressed by that aspect of the program.

I choose remembering a new phone number, remembering what trump is when I am playing bridge and I choose remembering every card that was played in each round during bridge. If that would happen – wow that would signal a good memory. I remember Carol Utay telling me after she did the program her old memory came back and she could remember long lists of information. Based upon her testimonial I am doing the program.

In bridge, like many card games, having a very good memory makes a huge difference in how well you play.

I play bridge in Week One of the memory program – noticed no improvement in my memory but I did realize that I don't have a good strategy for counting how many trump are still out – I try to remember it three different ways then can't remember which way I was remembering it then I really can't remember.

Note to self: pick one way to remember. I do and it works.

Entry #10: Last Day of Week One of Five of the memory program

Finally realized today that there is a bar on the right side of the computer screen that seems to show what my goal is for the day. Once I saw that I worked harder to hit that goal each exercise. Was the bar there all week – I really never saw it until day five – in a fog.

Realized even more that attention is a big key to memory, when I was distracted I got lost, when I repeated a pattern to myself it was easier to remember – attention and attention – maybe that's why there were questions in the initial interview about attention.

When I could identify a pattern, even with just a few items it made it easier like the number 963 = 3 less every time. I am developing my own strategies. I read it's easier to remember in chunks so now when I have six to remember I do it in two chunks of 3. Seven is the first three in a chunk – a floater in the middle – and three in an end chunk.

I can see in the lights exercise that when they form a triangle or an up down pattern well that's a chunk and it's easier to remember.

They say the average person can only remember seven pieces of information at one time, I am at the end of Week One and I still haven't hit seven very often and on occasion when I do I mess up and I drop back down to 6 or 5. I am "below average" and this week's work proves it.

How can I explain this program to others. Maybe I would say remember these numbers:

8, 9, 2, 5, 7, 3, 2

Now turn this paper over and write down these numbers.

Did you remember them? Well that's what this program is like, except the numbers might be on the arm of a giant robot – which makes it a bit less dry.

I find myself getting emotional during the program. I clearly can see my negativity and how it affects my performance. When I make a mistake it actually takes me some time to recover.

I find myself stressed out by this program. Like I have to breathe deeply to relieve my anxiety = so it's pretty clear - I know my memory is a problem and this is important to me and I am trying really hard to do well and it is making me really anxious – too anxious.

Entry #11: Week Two of Five Week Memory Program

I actually missed not doing it over the weekend. I do five days on – I do M-F and then two days off during the weekend. My house is too loud on the weekend to do this type of concentrating work.

I really want to do better. I watch the bar on the right that shows my highest score and I want to hit it.

When I get worked up and anxious it's harder to remember – like a catch 22. The anxiety makes my memory worse and my worse performance makes my anxiety even worse.

Oh, I found a new strategy (maybe I *did* read that memory book before I lost it) I find that repeating aloud what I see works well like I say 9,5,3,2,4,5 over before I start hitting the numbers.

I also find in the light sequence that counting when the lights light up helps, 1,2,3,4,5 then I repeat them as I hit the lights in sequence, the two items are not related but they do help me remember.

I can remember any five combos on all the segments now easily and four items to remember seems a cake walk (what's a cake walk?).

Entry #12: Bad news, I heard a 4 digit address in my real life and swore I could remember it ten minutes later but I was off by a digit and my daughter and husband easily remembered it. What a huge let down. The average person can remember a sequence of seven items – I am below average.

Playing bridge seems no easier this week – today I forgot I was in “no-trump” – that is one of the most basic things to remember in bridge.

Got a new exercise this week and my first try on it, I think I did great. That made it more interesting today – it's new and I think I was good at it.

Sometimes I fail so miserably trying to remember the lights or numbers it tells me to take a break. Really, the computer guy says "time to take a break." The computer reminds you aloud that you are below average.

Entry #13: We did our weekly phone coaching call session today. The coach told me I was doing well, that I should be struggling, that I was getting about half right which is what they want. Okay so the benchmark is fifty percent right – hmmm.

She reminded me to pick a weekly reward and then do it. I'm not all that into rewarding myself so it's kind of a pain. I think the program should give you a random reward – like there is a pot of rewards and during your weekly call you choose between three choices – like a big bar of Godiva chocolate or a \$10 gift card to Starbucks. I think I'm dedicated enough to not need a reward but she says it will help with motivation so I'll do it – if I remember.

I have been reading an old style book about how kids in grade school fifty years ago remembered classic pieces of information. Like there's a poem about the parts of speech – "a noun is a person place or thing like a game, a hoop or a string." The book also taught a way to remember the countries in Latin America in order – north to south – something I could never remember before. Guess what? I can name the countries - just remember My Great Big Hungry Elephant Nearly Consumed Panama. Only took me ten times to remember it. (Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama.)

I play bridge at the end of week two and although I notice NO difference in my memory I seem to see what mistakes the other players are making. I also decide on a strategy to remember who dealt last – I point my pencil towards the last dealer – I don't tell anyone but I take some shallow pride in knowing whose turn it is to deal – in bridge having a good memory is like driving up to a meeting in a Porsche. Hey, I also tell two of the players my definite way to remember what trump is. I now keep the trump suit on the left in my hand and I teach them how to remember how many trump cards are out – the three of us had the same problem we were using more than one memory strategy at the same time. They were very thankful.

New strategies: I try to remember numbers in three digits like the old area codes, as the sequence gets longer I use my fingers on one hand Navy pilot style – Navy pilots devised a way to count to ten on one hand so they could signal their wing man with one hand while keeping their other hand on the control stick – so I use Navy pilot numbers for the first number and that saves me one number to remember. I figure it's not cheating since I can use my Navy pilot counting in real life. I wonder if people really do cheat while doing this program? .

Entry #14: This is the last day of Week Two of Five Weeks. Today it was not good. I just didn't enjoy it. I find it dragging to not be successful. Really do you want to just be at 50% - half – that a C- and that doesn't feel good and I'm old enough that when I played soccer we kept score and teams won and lost – okay soccer wasn't popular yet when I was a kid and girls didn't play sports but I did know about winning and losing and this

feels like two weeks of losing. No matter how well I do I eventually hit a sequence so long I can't remember and then I lose and I get demoted back to dumb dumb class. Ugh.

Here is something I do like. When I finish each exercise the computer tells me in a voice if I got the highest score for that exercise and usually once or twice a day I do and that feels great – I figure that's an "A" or if I got in the top 5 of my top scores it tells me. The scores are on a scoreboard they show me at the end of the each exercise and almost always I am on the High Score Board but often it's not the top score – there are about nine exercises so if I get a high score on only one then I did worse than on the other eight days – depressing – reminds me that I don't have as good of a memory than I did the days before.

Better do that reward – decided to spend an hour at the book store reading new magazines and then subscribe to one of them. Choose Andrew Weil – Body and Soul.

New reward for week 2 – not sure but know what I want for a reward for finishing Week 3 – so I should arrange that now.

Entry #15: Week Three of Five Week Memory Program:

It's Wednesday. I am now exactly half-way through the \$1749 program and I am getting nervous that I wasted my money. My memory doesn't seem any better. I don't work so the time commitment is not an issue for me, imagine how depressing it would be if you were doing this and were very busy and you took time away from exercising or your family and nothing was happening.

I had my end of Week Two Phone Coaching Call: I spoke with the coach who assured me that the changes happen after the five week program and before the follow-up period – she is quite confident that I will see an improvement. Okay I feel reassured. She is so sincere it's easy to believe her.

This week there are a few new exercises and that is more interesting.

I find I am less nervous about doing this program.

Some days my memory is on and some days not. Sometimes I can't hit the high numbers that I had on previous days.

When I get to the 7 digit sequences if there is any - any distraction I can't remember.

When I get thrown off I really get thrown off and it takes several attempts to recover.

I find I like the program and I want to do it even on the weekend – I think my brain is being exercised in a way that it enjoys and it's like my brain is thirsty for it.

One of the new exercises is shooting asteroids – that seem easier than the other light up exercises. It's like an old video game – kind of like space invaders – fun but basic. I think having a purpose – saving the world from asteroids makes it more fun – just like the RoboRacing game/reward at the end of each day pulls you in because it's more

complicated than the memory exercises. The coach reminded me again that as an adult I do not have to play the racing robot game – but if I don't play I can't beat the metal cad and exert my domination over the twerp.

One new exercise is a 3D cube with colored panels. I think I can remember better in color. My daughter has synesthesia – maybe I have a touch - I think this one is easier than many of the others.

There is an exercise where there is a circle and the computer guys reveals random letters of the alphabet on the wheel and then take the letters away. Then you are asked – surprise - to remember which letters were where on the wheel (try saying that five times fast). I discover this week that I can remember the letters better if I make them countries (got that from My Great Big Hungry Elephant) so the letters UK next to each becomes the United Kingdom, or a U and a B = United Kingdom and Belgium. This might be my best strategy yet. But sometimes the letters are coming so fast I can't think of countries fast enough and it doesn't work.

Disappointing...the coach told me there are no strategies taught by the CogMed program. Wow, not what I expected. I expected cutting research, tried and tested strategies. She said it is designed this way to make you come up with your own strategies. Is that like reinventing the wheel? What if you don't have a good imagination? Could this be a design flaw? What if they send you strategies after you finish the program?

Speaking of strategies I read somewhere that putting an artificial vowel into a series of letters makes it easier to remember so “sck” becomes “sick” and that works well for me.

I played bridge twice this week and won both times. I didn't forget what trump was – but then coming up with a physical system to put trump on the left of my hand of cards made that easier. So is my memory improving or just my strategies?

Entry #16: End of Week Three of Five Week Memory Program – I am breezing through this. Can't believe there are only two weeks left. I could stand on my head for two weeks if I had too.

Entry #17: First Day of Week Four of Five Week Memory Program:
Week 4 this is getting old and very frustrating at times. I can finally understand the reward component - something has to keep you going. I have hit the wall. I do not want to do this anymore.

If I were a kid or a person who did not pay for this program I am not sure I would keep going with it. There are times that the computer gives me so many items in a sequence to remember that I just can't remember even one of them. Really I can't even get the first item right. Then there are times when I can remember seven items but I have to remember eight and it's the first one that I can't remember so the computer sends me back to dumb dumb level – there is no partial credit.

It's just pointless and frustrating. I am not sure I can finish this program.

When you mess too many times the computer tells you to take a break, you take a break and then miss more and it tells you to take another break then another break.

The computer is programmed to be encouraging, but clearly it tells you to take a break when you have screwed up a mathematical number of times so even though he sounds reassuring I read between the lines and it's really like he is saying "take a break and get you head into the game."

Entry #18: Day Two of Fourth Week of Five Week Memory Program:

Today I have just tried to get through – it's only Tuesday and there are exercises that I just can't even listen to - I just want to get it done and it shows – take a break it tells me. "I don't need a break," I tell him. I need to get as quickly through today as I can. It's not about performance today – it's about getting done.

A few times this week it tells me to take a break and I don't do it because I just want to get done. I am tired of failing, failing, failing, really each exercise you do you do until you fail. When you start out doing good, you work hard and get better and it ups your sequence number and you try really hard and beat it and it ups your sequence number and eventually the game wins and you lose because you just can't remember that much.

It reminds me of a lot of testing my kids had done. They test them and the questions keep getting harder until the kids fail. Then my kids walk out of the testing room like they just failed a bunch of tests - because they did.

Back to CogMed:

I have found with numbers more than 6 that I need some type of a pattern to get anywhere – I just can't remember 7 or more straight out.

ILU (I love you) is easy to remember as it 747 or 787 the airplane model numbers.

Here's an odd thing I notice this week: When I am memorizing a long sequence I am putting my memory into two places in my brain. First I memorize the first chunk and then I try to keep the second chunk in another place in my brain. It is very clear that I am putting them into two different places – like chunk one I put in the trunk and chunk two I hold in my lap. I think I am keeping a third chunk floating in the air not quite in my head.

I swear it is hard to remember when you don't know how many items you are supposed to remember – you think you heard them all and you can start pulling them out of your memory but then they give you one more and it throws you off and you lose it all. Is there a way to tell how many items are in the sequence? I can't figure it out.

On my weekly coaching calls I've been playing "Stump the Memory Coach" I think of all these questions to ask about the program and my performance and research and then I fire them at her – guess what? She is never stumped – like a good tennis player every ball that I send over to her she can hit back, she knows about my scores, when I was doing well, the research, the reasons behind why the program is running the way it is, she puts information together – really it's quite amazing – I am trying harder each week

to stump her with detailed questions and she always has plausible answers – I find it quite reassuring – I find something in the program that I think could be improved and she tells me why it was designed like that.

The only little issue is that on the asteroids segment my computer cursor, if placed in the wrong spot, can light up the wrong asteroid - but you figure out pretty quickly to move your cursor out of the way each time you play or the wrong asteroid lights up and well the world could be at stake.

Any type of triangle pattern makes it easier to remember you just have to remember the first one and then which direction the triangle goes.

We have a new game called Space Whack where green smoke poofs up from craters in a series and then you put your cursor over the first crater and when the green space creature comes up you whack him – if you are just one crater away you can't get there in time to whack him – I enjoy this one. It's like the old gopher whack at Chuckie Cheese I used to be really good at that. I like whacking the green aliens.

I find I enjoy the letter pattern as long as I can make a phrase that makes sense I K T is I'll kill Tamara – that makes it easier to remember and fun.

On very rare occasion I will just guess at a pattern I can't even remember one of and I am right. Really they say show eight lights, I try to review them quickly but I can't even remember the first one or the second or any of them but I have to answer something – I move the mouse to a light and it's right – I hit the next seven like I am in a trance and they are all right – wow like there was an alien inside of me. Some part of my memory is working in a way I never noticed before.

Entry #19: Still Week Four: I could see kids quitting this – I almost need a chart that shows me where I am on the 5 weeks because this week it's starting to seem bad – like a bad way to show myself every morning how bad my memory is and when it tells me over and over to take breaks because I can't get some simple one – yikes. I am glad the coach calls every week and reassures me in her calm, sincere voice. She reminds me to try really hard to do well on the last two of each exercise. I am glad for the High Score Chart because I can see that I did better at some point in these four weeks and that helps motivate me. I have to remind myself over and over that I want to do this – I want a better memory – I am not a quitter.

There are some exercises I did well on before and now I can't do half as many as I did last week. This should be downhill but it feels like uphill.

Entry #20: When I talked to the memory coach today and said I didn't see how it is working – my memory is no better. She explained the benefit would come after I take the course and it is over – maybe six months in the future.

After I hang up I start wondering about the whole short term memory of it all – short term memory is just part of it – this seems like just short term memory exercises. What

about storing information and what about pulling that information out of storage what about pairing information together and pulling it out together?

Next there is an auditory program I was planning to do – another issue with my brain I have – thank goodness the next program is much less expensive.

I am so not into this I have to devise this convoluted way of thinking to finish the program. I tell myself I have one week of five days left next week – and the last day is the last day so that doesn't really count so next week is really only like four days and then this week I have three days left – so if I can get through this week of only three days left then I really only have 4 days left.

Entry #21: Finally it is the Last Day of Week Four – I swear the entire week was torture – just about getting through it torture.

Finished week four, getting old.

Really hard thing is you play each exercise until you lose, so the whole program is losing.

Hitting a top score or being on the High Score Chart is somewhat motivating.

I am both disgusted with the program and yet my brain seems to crave it, on the weekend I want to do it. My brain needs the rest on the weekend the coach has told me.

Entry #22: But now it is Monday of Week Five of the Five Week Memory Program and I am like oh I have to do it again and I don't want to.

Another new exercise makes it all more interesting

I find that even numbers are easier to remember than odd numbers. A bunch of repeated numbers you would think would make it more easy but too many repeats just makes setting up a pattern more confusing because it's less discrete.

I like blowing up asteroids and smacking green aliens on Mars on the head. I've played those types of games before and it seems more like a game – could see kids enjoying those exercises.

Entry #23: I keep getting high scores at least two a day so clearly I am improving.

Don't notice any difference in my real life other than I tell myself I have to pay attention in order to remember, it has to be more conscious with me.

Weekly call from coach answers more tough questions. She really is a critical piece to this program and well trained.

Still amazed how the littlest noise in the background will make me totally forget what I am trying to remember.

Had a problem with my computer and had to delay several days of the program. Spent hours trying to install the program on three other computers in my house but something was wrong with all the configurations on the other three.

Had to make it up on the weekend.

Really felt like I was missing something when I wasn't doing the program.

See no real difference in my real life.

I am using my brain in more than one place at the same time, practicing visually what I am going to do and repeating pattern.

In asteroids there are big and little rocks two sizes so I repeat "big big little little little big."

Definitely repeating numbers backwards is harder and seeing them while they are being said I score much better than just hearing it

Wonder in my real life if I should both write down things to remember better and say what I am writing aloud.

Getting tougher to finish last week of program, it's been five times a week for over four weeks

Just tell myself it will all come to an end.

Tired of trying to remember and then being wrong.

Entry #24: Finally it's the day before the last day I am both torn with wanting to do well because it's so close to the end and sprinting through just to be totally done with it, I just want it over with.

I think a kid – less committed would just start hitting keys to get it over.

Computer tells me I got too many wrong in a row and to take a break – no way I'd rather get them wrong then drag this out any longer. I do not take a break.

Find myself doing so well on some that they give me so many items to remember that I so totally flub them then the computer keeps dropping me down and down in the number to remember until I am almost back in the early days.

Tomorrow is my last day and I want to get out of here.

Entry #25: Today is my last day – now I regret being cavalier yesterday – I really want this program to work. Today is my last chance.

Today I am going to the library to find books on the brain to read.

What will I do with the time when this is over? What if it doesn't work? What if it does work?

So today is my last day – my goal is to try really hard and remember absolutely as much as I can. Today I am a storm trooper.

Okay so I can barely make it through today - I am both trying hard and getting totally frustrated with how hard it is. I feel my energy and commitment waning – I just want to get it over with.

Wow, I just notice I don't in anyway get as nervous like I am being tested. My anxiety level is really much lower. I am just more aggravated like I have done this and failed it so many times how many more times do I have to do it?

Yeeesssss, I got a number of top places today, I guess that makes sense for last day, finally getting hang of some tests like you must have a strategy, you must be paying attention, repeat under your breath, if pattern is easy point with your fingers, repeat pattern in your mind, etc.

DONE

At the end I was happy to do really well - Top Score on quite a number and only one or two only today not in the top five.

Epilogue: One Week - Two Months Later:

My results are spotty. One night I was in bed making a mental list of five important things to do the next morning. Then I reminded myself that there was NO WAY I could remember these things between tonight and tomorrow morning. The next morning I woke up and into my head popped all five items – like an arrow shooting into my brain. I ran downstairs to start my list convinced the physical activity would distract me and I would start to forget but I never did. Amazing!

At the grocery store I was buying bulk items and they were out of tags to write down the code numbers so I tried to remember two three digit numbers. I finished shopping and when the cashier asked what was in the bags I told her the two three digit numbers and not just surprised myself but I think she thought “wow, she remembered” even though six digits is below average I felt above average.

Today I had a doctor's appt. at 9:25 a.m. When I rechecked my calendar at 9:00 I saw I forgot the real time – my appointment was at 8:50 a.m. Called the doctor's office – now I have to wait until December for an appointment – I hate my bad memory.

Had my final coaching call. Also got a follow-up program so I can do 100 refresher sessions of the memory program in the next year. I will start three times a week when my kids go back to school.

Gradually you will notice that your memory gets better – then one day it will be great.

I run into a doctor I know at the mall – she gives me two referrals for kids’ doctors and then tells me to phone her office to get their phone numbers – like you won’t remember their names so call me – she is very gracious – my memory stinks – no way I will remember the names so I tell my husband the names. Ten minutes later I ask my husband their names. He gets only one of them right but I remember. The next week I pride myself on remembering their names over and over.

So is my memory better two months later? First my strategies are better. My attention when working on remembering is much better. My memory is maybe overall 15-20% better – without the strategies maybe 7% better.

I am starting the new sessions this week and eagerly awaiting a better memory. I’ll keep you updated – if I remember – no I will – I won’t forget

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