



Welcome

YOUR PRESENTERS ARE: MALI LEVAV AND ELIZABETH STENHOUSE
YOUR FACILITATOR IS: ANDREA SALMON



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Acknowledgement of country



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Introductions

TODAY'S PRESENTERS



Elizabeth Stenhouse



Mali Levav

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Managing cognitive changes in the workplace

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What is Cognition?



Group of Mental Processes such as:

- Visual Perception
- Language
- Calculation
- **Attention**
- **Information Processing Speed**
- **Memory**
- **Executive Functions**

Cognitive changes in MS



- Common
- Mild
- Fluctuate
- Varies between people

What is causing these changes?



- Changes in the brain
- Fatigue aggravated by poor sleep
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Medications

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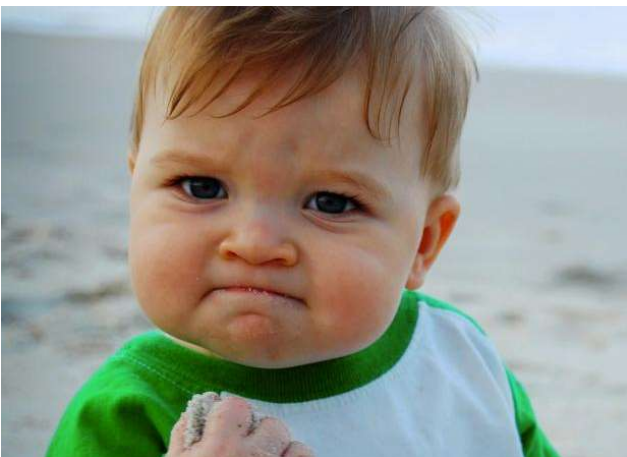
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Managing cognitive changes

CAN WE DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?



Absolutely!!!

Based on a
true story.

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Poll



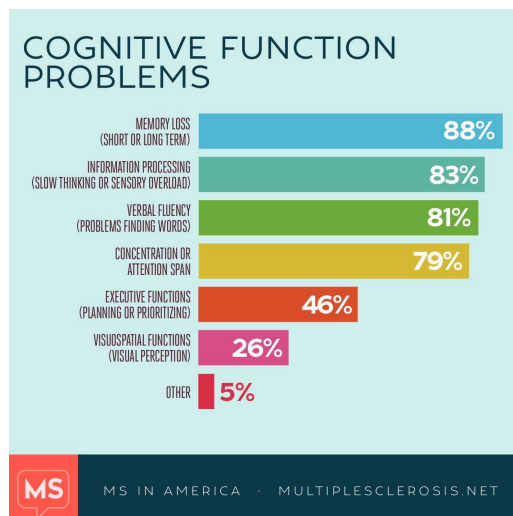
What is your type of job?

- White collar: professional / managerial / admin
- Blue collar: manual work
- Grey collar: skilled workers that complete some manual labor, such as technicians and nurses
- Pink-collar: retail, sales, customer service

Likely cognitive weaknesses



ONLINE SURVEY OF PEOPLE WITH MS



Cognitive strengths



- Attention for short time
- Procedural memory
- Language
- General knowledge

Attention & Concentration



- Select and focus on the relevant stimuli while ignoring competing stimuli
- Switch between stimuli

Potential challenges at work:

- Difficulty to concentrate for prolonged time (reading a long document, concentrating during a long meeting); mind wandering
- Difficulty doing two simultaneous tasks (taking minutes in meetings)
- Being interrupted during a task increases mental fatigue
- Struggling to work in open plan office / easily distracted

Attention & Concentration



STRATEGIES

- Complete higher level attention tasks when feeling more fresh
- Alternate between tasks which require more / less concentration, pending on energy
- Take short regular rest breaks every 30-45min
- Break a long task to smaller components
- Prioritise tasks and complete one task at a time - most people are monotaskers!
- Set alarm / reminder to complete the task based on your attention span
- Book a private room, block time in diary and ask not to be interrupted
- Use noise cancelling headphones to reduce distractions
- Assistive Technology: Livescribe Smartpen; Otter app

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Assistive Technology



DIGITAL NOTES

Livescribe Smartpen

- Paper-based computing platform
- The pen is embedded with computer & digital audio recorder
- Notes are synced with recorded audio
- Be mindful there are different types
- Products can be ordered via <https://www.littlebird.com.au/>

Otter app

- Voice recorder that offers automatic transcription by using Artificial Intelligence
- Designed to understand and capture conversations between multiple people.
- Can transcribe Zoom meetings
- Basic features are free
- <https://otter.ai>

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Information Processing Speed



- The time it takes to complete a mental task
- Slowed processing speed is very common!

Potential challenges at work:

- Difficulty with keeping up with information presented (e.g., conversations, meetings, instructions) & feeling overloaded as a result
- Struggling to complete complex tasks / learn new tasks **quickly**
- Struggling to solve problems or make decisions **quickly**

Information Processing Speed



STRATEGIES

- Ask colleagues / supervisor to slow down
- Repeat back information
- Be prepared for meetings (be familiar with the agenda; write down dot points)
- As possible - give yourself more time to complete new / complex tasks
- Prioritise your tasks and postpone (or delegate) not-urgent tasks
- If disclosed - talk to your supervisor about providing extra time / reducing workload

Verbal Fluency / Word Finding



- Retrieve information from memory to express words
- Relies on information processing speed

Potential challenges at work:

- Reduced confidence in participating in meetings / presenting
- Struggling to write emails / reports **quickly**

Verbal Fluency / Word Finding



STRATEGIES

- Try to relax and use a different word.
- Prepare for meetings / presentations by writing down key words and practice prior to the event.
- When writing reports / emails - use thesaurus and/or templates; prepare most common list of words; copy, paste and then adjust

Memory and New Learning



- Attention
- Processing
- Recall / Retrieval

Potential challenges at work:

- Difficulty remembering names of colleagues
- Difficulty recalling information read, said or shown
- Difficulty remembering tasks completed
- Difficulty remembering tasks which need to be done



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Memory and New Learning



STRATEGIES

- Pay attention! Catch yourself when your mind wanders & bring it back to 'here and now'
- Give yourself more time to process and recall information, be patient with yourself and practice new tasks frequently
- Know your learning style and do something **active**:
 - **Visual**: write notes, highlight key words, use manuals, ask people to send you emails
 - **Auditory**: repeat and verify, record notes using assistive technology
 - **Kinaesthetic**: ask people to show you and do the task yourself, ask for feedback
- Learning information by watching videos / webinars (combines different learning styles)
- Remembering names by using **association** and **visualisation**
- Use organisation strategies to document tasks completed or to be completed, such as manual or digital to-do lists (<https://todoist.com/>), diary, calendar, organiser, notepad
- Use two screens (if possible) so all the information is in front of you

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Executive Functions



Mental skills that help the brain organise and act on information:

- Planning & Prioritising
- Organisation
- Initiation
- Flexibility / Shifting
- Problem Solving
- Self monitoring
- Emotional & behavior control



Executive Functions



POTENTIAL CHALLENGES AT WORK & STRATEGIES

Not sure where to start so procrastinate

Start the task only after you understand expectations

Dive into tasks without prioritising and planning

Give yourself time to plan, prioritise and organise

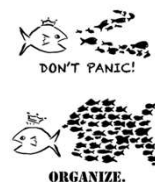
Set time limits for each task

Make checklists / to-do lists and tick off tasks done

Use planners / calendars

Say / do the first thing that come to mind

Give yourself time to weigh up different options



Executive Functions



POTENTIAL CHALLENGES AT WORK & STRATEGIES

Rushing tasks and making mistakes

Check your work before submitting it

Struggle with quick decision making or dealing with changes at work

Take rest breaks from mentally fatiguing tasks

Ask for help from your colleagues / supervisor

Misplacing items

Have a 'Home' for each item



Managing factors affecting cognition



FATIGUE MANAGEMENT & ENERGY CONSERVATION

TASK



- Complete harder tasks when feeling more fresh
- Break tasks to smaller components & pace yourself
- Use tools / equipment as appropriate

Managing factors affecting cognition

FATIGUE MANAGEMENT & ENERGY CONSERVATION
ENVIRONMENT



- Ergonomic workstation
- Keep cool
- Move desk closer to printer / bathroom / staff room
- Reduce visual and audio stimuli - declutter / organise work area, move desk to quieter area or use noise cancelling headphones

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Managing factors affecting cognition

FATIGUE MANAGEMENT & ENERGY CONSERVATION
PERSON



- Prioritise & plan your day / route to workplace
- Pace yourself
- Take short regular breaks
- Sit to complete tasks when possible but change postures
- Delegate tasks as possible
- Allow enough rest & sleep before and after work
- Eat healthily & keep hydrated
- Exercise

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Managing factors affecting cognition

STRESS & MOOD



- Relaxation
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Exercise
- Games & social activities
- Doing things just for fun!
- Counselling

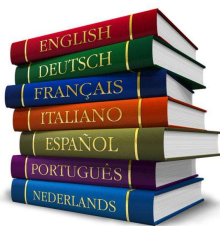
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Cognitive Reserve & Neuroplasticity

FIND THE RIGHT AND FUN CHALLENGE FOR YOU!



- Relaxation
- Learn something new
- Take a course
- Read
- Play games
- Exercise
- Online Brain Training such as: Brain HQ, CogniFit, Lumosity

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Questions



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Services



SUPPORTING AUSTRALIANS TO LIVE WELL WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS



We are here so nobody faces MS alone

Multiple Sclerosis Limited (MS) provides a range of services to support people with multiple sclerosis to live the best lives they can. We service people in ACT, NSW, TAS and VIC.

-  Allied Health (NDIS, My Aged Care)
-  NDIS Plan and Support Coordination
-  Free MS Helpline Service (Specialist Advice and Information)
-  Employment Support
-  Residential Care
-  Wellbeing and Peer Support
-  Education for Community and Health Professionals
-  Respite and Carer Support

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Resources

FREE TO ACCESS



PODCASTS

- MS Podcast Series
- Intouch E-Newsletter
- Webinar library
- Interactive and personalised online tools
- Online 'live' events such as Facebook Live



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Contact us for more

WE ARE HERE SO NO-ONE HAS TO FACE MS ALONE



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Monday – Friday, 8am – 6pm



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THANK YOU

