

Memory difficulties and communication

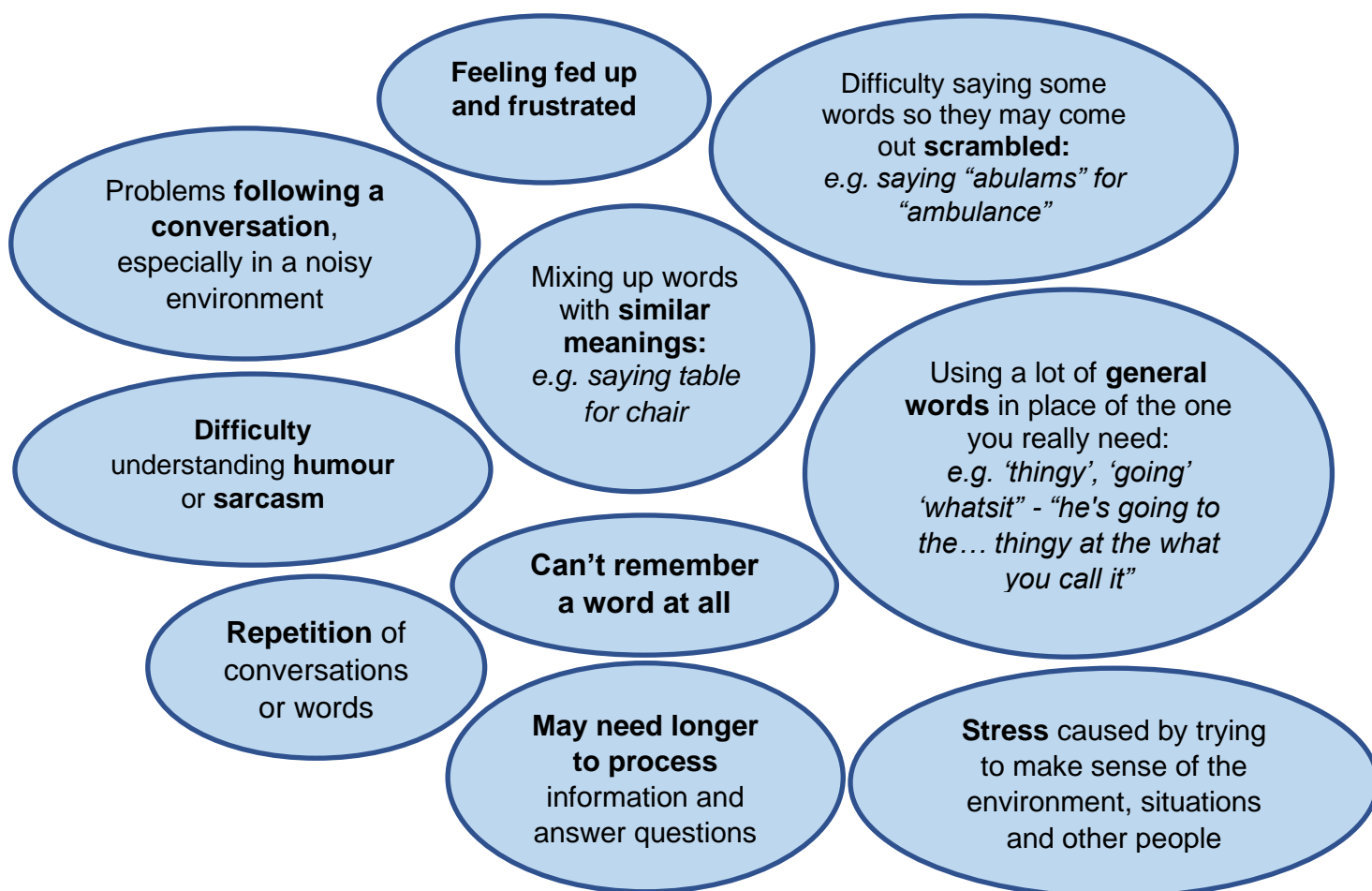
People with memory problems find it **hard to store and remember information** that they know.

This affects skills such as **word finding, remembering people's names, remembering recent** conversations and events.

The part of the brain that allows new information to be processed may be damaged which makes it **harder for the person to form new memories and learn new information.**

What can it look like?

When someone has memory problems, it can affect their ability to talk to their loved ones. **Some common difficulties include:**



General practical tips

Memory aids:



- Use a **diary** to record important events & appointments. This could be a written diary or on your phone.



- Set an **alarm** on your phone to remind you to complete specific tasks, e.g. to take your medication, to meet friends, or attend an appointment.



- **Label** your cupboards to help you remember where things are kept in the house / kitchen



- **Written prompts** e.g. Place a written reminder on your door to remember to lock the door and put the alarm on when you go out. Have notes around the house to help jog your memory.



- **Electronic memory aids**, such as:

- **Item locators** (a tag that flashes or beeps can help you find misplaced items such as keys)
- **Vibrating watches** (programmable to buzz at set times and play pre-recorded messages)
- **Motion activated memory aids** (that play a voice message when you move near them)
- **Digital voice recorders** (record and store voice notes)



Communication books / white boards:

These can be useful to document a conversation, a visit or an important event. They can also be a good memory jogger.

Life story or memory books:

Making a book that captures memories and stories about a person's life can help communication. It can be referred to over and over again to help remember forgotten memories and prompt conversation.

Routine and organisation:

Many people find routines help their memory. It builds familiarity in situations. Simple things such as keeping the keys in the same place can be helpful. Consider a 'memory basket' to keep important items in one place e.g. keys, glasses, wallet/purse, phone. Also try focus on one thing at a time and avoid multitasking.

Strategies to support memory difficulties and communication:

1	<p>Limit distractions:</p> <p>Turn off background noise and get the person's attention before you start speaking to them.</p>
2	<p>Be specific:</p> <p>Avoid using personal pronouns or vague language, even if you have just mentioned the name. e.g. say "We are going to see <u>your daughter Sarah</u>" rather than "we are going to see <u>her</u>")</p>
3	<p>Speak slowly, clearly and in short sentences:</p> <p>It can take longer for the person to follow the conversation. Take your time and don't rush. Keeping it simple will aid understanding.</p>
4	<p>Give plenty of time:</p> <p>It may take longer for the person to answer or think what to say so count to 5 before repeating the question.</p>
5	<p>Break down tasks into smaller steps:</p> <p>Give one piece of information at once. Too much information can be confusing and easily forgot. e.g. "Get your shoes" (wait), "now get your coat" (wait), "the red one".</p>
6	<p>Gesture or action:</p> <p>Use your hands or body to act out what you're saying. e.g. "Do you want a cup of tea.... (mimics drinking with hand)?"</p>
7	<p>Draw:</p> <p>Use drawing/pictures to illustrate what you're saying e.g. show a picture of Tesco's logo when you say you're going out shopping</p>
8	<p>Avoid asking too many questions:</p> <p>If someone is having difficulty remembering certain information or a specific word, they may find too many questions is frustrating. Questions that only need a yes/no response are the easiest to answer.</p>
9	<p>Provide opportunities for communication:</p> <p>Some people have difficulty starting a conversation. They may enjoy it and have a lot to say once you start them off.</p>
10	<p>Stay calm and smile!</p> <p>If they are having problems communicating and begin to get upset over it, let them know it's okay. Be comforting and encourage them.</p>