

MEMORY BOOK

A USEFUL TOOL



**BRAIN ANEURYSM
FOUNDATION**

Working Towards a World Without Ruptures

OUR MISSION

Provide information about and raise awareness of the symptoms and risk factors of brain aneurysms to prevent ruptures and subsequent death and disability.

Work with medical communities to provide support networks for patients and families.

Advance research to improve patients' outcomes and save lives.



Most survivors have memory problems and many cannot remember to do things during the day. If possible, consultation with an outpatient speech therapist to evaluate and treat cognitive deficits is beneficial. Your nurse who works with your neurosurgeon or neurologist can help you obtain this evaluation. Survivors with memory problems often benefit from learning to use a memory book. This useful tool is based on the principle that practice produces new habits over time.



RETURNING HOME AFTER A RUPTURED ANEURYSM

Imagine a survivor who has returned home following a ruptured aneurysm and several weeks of living in a rehabilitation facility. She has recovered enough to stay at home during the day while her husband goes to work but gets little accomplished while he is gone. She has trouble getting organized and becomes distracted if she tries to do too many things at once.

It is not unusual for her husband to return home from work and find the wet laundry still in the machine because she did not remember to move the clothes to the dryer. She also struggles to take her noon dose of medication on time and has, on occasion, taken it twice.

THE UNINFORMED CAREGIVER'S REACTION

If her husband is uninformed about why this is happening, he might become frustrated and angry, believing that his wife “just doesn’t try,” or “just wants me to do it all.” Returning home to disorder, he might speak harshly, suggesting she is not working at recovery or that she is “lazy.”

Hearing these words, she might begin to believe that he is right and that she is worthless. Because neither understands the root cause of these challenges, no solution emerges, and frustrations and distress build on both sides.



CREATING A PRACTICAL TREATMENT PLAN

With a basic understanding of behavioral principles, the husband can design a plan to systematically teach his wife to use a memory book.

First, he needs to analyze the problem. Simply giving her a list of things to do will not work because she will forget to check the list during the day. Instead, he must help her build a new habit of consulting the memory book frequently—using it to organize and track what she wants to accomplish while he is away.

BUILDING MEMORY SKILLS THROUGH PRACTICE

The treatment plan to encourage memory skill development is based on a simple but powerful principle: practice produces results. Once the habit of using the memory book is established, the survivor becomes increasingly capable of planning and following through on her own.

The plan begins with active involvement from the husband, but as the wife practices, the behavior becomes automatic. This process can then be repeated for new tasks as recovery progresses.

DEVELOPING THE HABIT

In this case, the key skill learned by the wife is to consult her memory book every hour and follow the plans she and her husband set the previous day. By using prompts and cues to encourage repetition, the husband helps his wife form a lasting habit—allowing her to accomplish daily goals and regain a sense of independence and control.



HOW TO BUILD A DAILY MEMORY ROUTINE

There are many systems that have been designed to assist memory-impaired people remember to do what they have planned. Below is a simple template for learning to use a memory book.

1. Plan the next day and write down goals.
 2. Break the day into one- to two-hour segments.
 3. Write goals for each segment.
 - 10:00 a.m. “Put laundry in washing machine and start”
 - 11:00 a.m. “Take laundry from washing machine and place in dryer”
 - 12:00 p.m. “Take laundry from dryer, sort and fold”
 4. Set a watch or smartphone timer to beep at two-hour intervals. It is helpful for the caregiver to call every two hours to make sure the memory book is available and was consulted at the right time.
 5. At each time interval, the survivor records the activities for the previous hour and carries out the tasks designated for the next hour.
 6. At the end of the day, the caregiver and survivor review the day’s progress. Adjustments are made until the survivor can follow the schedule independently. In our example, phone calls and the beeping watch or smartphone would not be needed after the habit of using the book is established. The need or ability of a survivor to use these suggestions depend on the extent of impairment as well as the degree of support that is available.
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