

# Attention and Concentration

## What is attention and concentrations?

- Attention is the ability to focus on a task or subject
- Concentration is the ability to maintain this attention for a certain amount of time

## Why do we need attention and concentration in everyday life?

Attention and concentration is required to successfully complete a task and it is especially important when doing new activities. If your attention or concentration is impacted, you may have the following difficulties in your everyday life:

- Remembering information (if information is not initially 'stored' or 'filed' well in your brain, it is harder to recall later)
- Maintaining attention when reading e.g. forgetting what you have read straight away
- Forgetting to complete familiar tasks properly e.g. forgetting to add milk to a cup of tea
- Being easily distracted e.g. by people talking around you or the TV in the background
- Not finishing a task that you have started.

## Activities to practice attention and concentration:

- Read short stories or magazines instead of long books.
- Computer and table top games (e.g. scrabble) encourage you to concentrate to complete the game. You may be able to gradually increase the amount of time you can concentrate on these activities.
- Participate in interesting physical activities such as exercise and gardening.

## What is involved in attention?

### Alertness

- Time of day can affect alertness e.g. when you just wake up, or if you are feeling drowsy or unwell. If you are not alert things just don't 'register'.
- Common Difficulties:
  - You may find that you don't notice when someone says hello to you, or are slow to respond.

### Sustained attention

- Often referred to as your 'attention span'. This is the ability to maintain your attention, or concentrate long enough to complete the task.
- Common difficulties:
  - It may be difficult for you to read large amounts of text and take in all of the information.
  - You may need prompts from another person to complete a task.

## Selective attention

- This is the ability to focus on the task you are doing and ignore surrounding distractions.
- Common difficulties:
  - You may become easily distracted from a task if there is background noise e.g. the TV.
  - If you were having a conversation with a friend and someone next to you started talking, the extra noise may shift your attention from your own conversation.

## Alternating or shifting attention

- This is the ability to shift your attention from one task to another.
- Common difficulties:
  - When cooking, you may find it difficult to keep track of several things at once e.g. a saucepan on the stove and something in the oven.
  - Keeping track of 2-3 children in a busy playground.

## Divided attention

- This is the ability to attend to two or more activities at the same time. Often called 'multi-tasking'.
- Common difficulties:
  - Doing the ironing while watching TV.
  - Multi-tasking at work, e.g. talking to a person, writing an email and keeping track of the time to go to a meeting.

## How can I improve attention and concentration?

### Before you begin:

- Clear your mind and relax when attempting to focus or concentrate.
- Minimise distractions such as TV and radio within your environment.
- Reduce clutter when doing an activity, e.g. clear the space before starting work.

### As you are doing an activity:

- Plan activities one step at a time. Write down the steps to complete a task and tick off each step as you go.
- Say the steps of a task out loud.
- Monitor your progress. Take a break when your concentration is beginning to decrease.

### Suggestions for reading:

- Use contrasting colours to draw attention to important points or objects.
- Cover up the words you are not reading.

**Please contact your therapist if you have any queries or concerns.**

**Therapist:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone: (07) 3646 7100**