



Synergy Education Lifestyle Fitness

Advertising Feature **The Chronicle**

HEALTH is not just a matter of physicality – it's a holistic concept. That's why this month SELF is turning the focus on self-improvement and mental health.

We're going to talk to you about your memory capacity, its functions and how to exploit it to its full potential to get better results from your brain.

We'll have a chat to the experts on how you can make things easier on yourself and at home by mastering the lost art of listening.

We'll also provide pointers to some of the mental health services available in the ACT.

Happy reading!

- The SELF team

### Monthly content themes:

**May:** Eating Healthy – Diabetes

**June:** The Men's Edition

**July:** Work/Life Balance

**August:** Stress Relief

**September:** Weight Loss

**October:** Healthy Kids/Family Edition

**November:** The Great Outdoors

If you are interested in advertising, please contact The Chronicle SELF project manager, Graham Spencer, today on 6280 2377.

# The slippery slope of memory

By Dione Van-Heer

**HAVE you ever heard friends and family proclaim some of these old chestnuts; "I have a hopeless memory", "I'm terrible with names" or "I never forget a face"?**

Discrepancies in memory exist between humans, but according to founder and managing director of Brainpower Training, Nina Sunday, we all have the potential to improve our capacity, and the first step is realising the logistics of it all.



**FRUSTRATING:** A poor memory can be the source of much stress at work and home.

"If those who complained about poor memory understood more about how memories formed, they wouldn't have unrealistic expectations about what could be remembered," Ms Sunday said. The earliest scientific experiments in memory measured the natural rate of forgetting and revealed that up to two-thirds of the detail of information is forgotten in the first 48 hours.

"Forgetting is fast at first, then becomes gradual," she said.

It is the reason that students who review their notes the same night after a lecture or a lesson, do better in later exams, as, by reviewing at the time of original learning, they stop the forgetting before it occurs.

But why does forgetting occur in the first place? It's easier to understand if we look at the way a memory is made.

"When we first retrieve an item of information, it creates a brain cell pathway in the brain, like a skier skiing down a hill of fresh snow creates a track in the snow," Ms Sunday said.

"Subsequent runs downhill tend to follow a similar track in the snow, and recalling an item of information creates the pathway, making it easier to subsequently retrieve that same item.

Based on this rationale, we can improve memory. For example, to recall a name, Ms Sunday suggests paying close attention at the time of first being introduced, rehearsing the name mentally to create the brain cell pathway and to start using the name in conversation straight away.

"The more you use the name, the more encoded it becomes in your brain, moving it from the working memory to the long-term memory," she said.

Ms Sunday uses this fundamental technique to teach people how to operate with a high performance memory and how to speed-read (it's possible to learn to think faster) and the benefits are numerous and valuable, particularly as we get older.

She cites a study that was carried out on people aged 60 to 87 years, who did memory training an hour a day for eight to 10 weeks.

"Afterwards, they performed on memory tests like people in the 40 to 60 age-range, so it's possible to turn back the memory clock 10 to 25 years with brain exercise," she said.

Thus the key to avoiding age-related mental decline is to continue to learn new skills that challenge us. It's these key concepts Ms Sunday uses to help individuals and organisations.

**For more information on the Brainpower Training ebook for students, or on courses in Canberra visit [www.brainpowertraining.com.au](http://www.brainpowertraining.com.au) or [www.studylikeabrainiac.com.au](http://www.studylikeabrainiac.com.au)**