

Metacognitive Therapy



THERAPY UNIT 8: MEMORY AND OVERCONFIDENCE

Memory

- Our capacity to memorize information is limited.
- Example: Approximately 40% of the details of a story we have heard half an hour ago can not actively be recalled.
- **Advantage:** ???
- **Disadvantage:** ???

Memory

- Our capacity to memorize information is limited.
- Example: Approximately 40% of the details of a story we have heard half an hour ago can not actively be recalled.
- **Advantage:** Our brain is not overloaded with useless information, **but...**
- **Disadvantage:** ... Many important memories are also lost (appointments, holiday memories, knowledge acquired in school...).

Are people with psychosis generally forgetful?

???

Yes and no!

Studies show that many people with psychosis don't do as well in memory and attention tests as people who do not have psychosis. However, the following has to be taken into account:

1. These findings are based on average results that are not necessarily true for all individual cases. There are many people with psychosis that don't show deficits.
2. The discovered deficits are far smaller than those of people with dementia (e.g. Alzheimer's).
3. The deficits – if there are any – can improve. Rumination, inner distraction due to hearing voices or a lack of motivation can all intensify these problems or even cause them. There are specific techniques (presented later) that can compensate these problems.

Task 1

You will be shown a scene.

Afterwards you will be asked to recall what you saw in the picture.

Please also state how confident you are about your observations.

Try to remember all details correctly!



The artist

What did you see? How confident are you?

- o tin
- o chair
- o paint brush
- o easel
- o waistcoat
- o shoes
- o palette with paint
- o paper

The artist

- o tin
- o chair
- o Paint brush
- o **easel**
- o waistcoat
- o shoes
- o **palette with paint**
- o paper

 = not presented



Why are we doing this?

- Many (but not all) people with psychosis have memory deficits that are sometimes intensified due to rumination or distraction by hearing voices.
- Studies show that many people with psychosis (but not all!) are more confident in their false memories than people without psychosis.
- At the same time, the confidence for *true memories* (i.e. things that really happened) is decreased in psychosis.
- **Conclusion:** The ability to differentiate between true and false memories is affected! This can lead to misjudgments! When not absolutely certain, it should be considered that one is mistaken. To be sure, other people should be asked to confirm.

How memory errors and being overconfident of one's own judgments promote misinterpretations during psychosis – examples

Event	False memory	Actual situation
You're at the supermarket and want to pay for your groceries at the register, but your wallet is empty.	Recollection that you got money out from the cash machine. Thereupon accusing your flat mate of having taken the money.	You only had the intention of going to the cash machine but then forgot about it.
Meeting old friends	Allegedly you were taunted by others for being currently out of work.	Others heard that you are unemployed when you were talking about it to a friend. There was an awkward silence for a moment, but no one reacted with taunting.



→ worksheet 8.1

Task 2

You will be shown a complex scene.

Afterwards you will be asked to recall what you saw in the picture.

Please also state how confident you are about your observations.

Try to remember all details correctly!



Brainstorming

What do you typically see at a barbecue?

...

...

...

...

Barbecue

What did you see? How confident are you?

- o sausages
- o ketchup
- o charcoal
- o lawn chairs
- o mustard
- o barbecue tongs
- o glasses

Barbecue

- o sausages
- o **ketchup**
- o charcoal
- o lawn chairs
- o mustard
- o **barbecue tongs**
- o glasses



 = not presented



Brainstorming

What do you typically see in a children's room?

...

...

...

...

Children's room

What did you see in the picture? How confident are you?

- o play kitchen
- o dolls
- o stuffed animals
- o kids' chairs
- o books
- o doll house
- o excavator

Children's room

- o play kitchen
- o dolls
- o **stuffed animals**
- o **kids' chairs**
- o books
- o doll house
- o excavator



 = not presented



Brainstorming

What do you typically see in a kitchen?

...

...

...

...

Kitchen

What did you see in the picture? How confident are you?

- o frying pan
- o toaster
- o tea towel
- o kettle
- o cleaning cloth
- o bottles
- o knife block

Kitchen

- o frying pan
- o toaster
- o **tea towel**
- o kettle
- o cleaning cloth
- o bottles
- o **knife block**



 = not presented

Types of memory errors

- o **forgetting**
- o **memory biases:**
 - negative memories are primarily forgotten (repression)
 - positive memories are primarily forgotten (depressed mood)
- o **illusions/false memories:** Certain things are remembered that did not happen this way!

What causes false memories?

Our brain replaces and adds missing information from previous and related events (e.g. visit at the zoo, safari) and a lot is added by “logic” (in the example: rhino, lion) respectively!

Stress increases the proneness to memory errors!

Real memories can often be differentiated from false memories by their “**vividness**”: false memories are rather “pale” and less detailed.

False memories in everyday life

e.g. childhood memories



- Siblings' memories of the same event often differ on many details
- Sometimes we think that we clearly remember certain events when we actually only know about them from pictures or our parents

e.g. when situations strongly resemble each other

- e.g. looking for your car: we are sure to have parked the car at a certain place but this might have been the day before

e.g. to "get hold of the wrong end of the stick"

- Our mood often adds to or "flavors" our memories (after an argument, we tend to remember what the opponent said as more hostile than it actually was)

False memories in the general public

Example: causal attribution



In 2006, in a controversial decision, the performance of “Idomeneo” at the Berlin Opera House was cancelled due to the *fear* of protests by Islamic groups (the play presented some religious leaders, among them Mohammed, in a way that a deeply religious person might find offensive). Looking back today, some people claim to remember that the performance was cancelled following real public protests by Muslim groups, which is not true. Instead, there were also Muslims criticizing the cancellation of the opera back then.

Clinging to false memories

What are the consequences of that?

What are possible consequences of insisting on false memories, i.e. when you are wrongly convinced that they really happened?

???

Clinging to false memories

What are the consequences of that?

What are possible consequences of insisting on false memories, i.e. when you are wrongly convinced that they really happened?

- I get into fights with others due to contradicting memories of the same event (e.g. I demand money back that I have been paid back long ago).
- In the case of (false) memories of negative events (e.g. supposedly being rejected), I react to my environment in a hostile way and do people wrong.
- The line between reality and imagination becomes blurry.

Memory aids in daily life

Do not overstrain your memory. Take notes systematically:

1. Keep an appointment calendar/memo book or use your smartphone (if applicable).
2. No paper chaos: Use *one* main notebook to write things down or use electronic tools.
3. Pin memos for important plans (e.g. time to take medication) at places you pass several times a day (e.g. pin board, fridge, bathroom mirror).
4. Write down intentions/plans! Whatever is written down gives our memory less to do.
5. Still try to memorize things without aids.

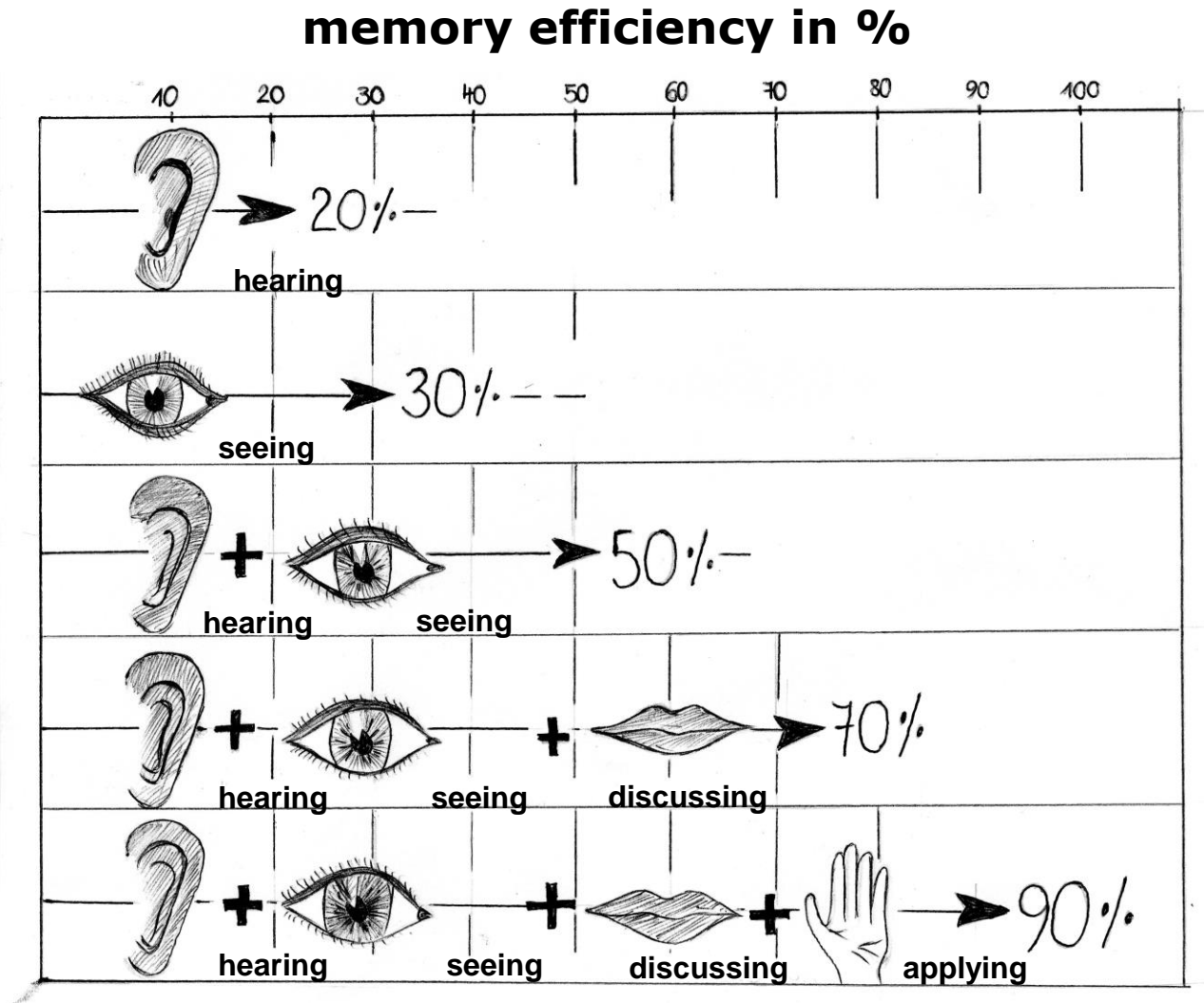


How can I remember things better?

- o repeat & revise, **COMPREHEND**
- o use mnemonic aids, especially for abstract contexts, e.g.:
 - o daylight saving:
In spring you move your garden furniture forward in front of the house.
In autumn you move them back into the shed.
 - o screwdrivers: **l**eft = **l**oosen
- o link new information with prior knowledge
- o do not study for excessive amounts of time
- o no alcohol consumption during studying
- o go to sleep soon after studying
- o study using as many of your senses as possible (e.g. hearing, seeing...)

How can I remember things better?

The more senses are involved in a learning process, the better you will remember what you learned!



Learning objectives:

- Our memories can play tricks on us! Especially for important events (quarrel, eyewitness testimony etc.) keep in mind:
If you cannot remember *vivid* details about an event,
think of the possibility that you might be wrong. Seek additional information (e.g. ask a witness).
- Use memory aids (calendar, smartphone, notebook to write down appointments and to-do's).

Learning objectives:

- False memories are more likely to arise if one is afraid, feels threatened or is under stress.
- Before drawing far-reaching conclusions: consider how objective and well-founded your memories and assumptions really are!
- Also take into account: false memories are often more pale (i.e. less detailed and vivid) than true memories.

Application to everyday life

During psychosis people are prone to remember things that happened in a different way or not at all.

What aspects of the therapy unit do I find particularly useful or helpful?

When and in what specific situation could I apply what I learned in the near future? What could it help me with (e.g. to feel less tense)?



→ worksheet 8.2

What does this have to do with psychosis?

Example: Karen is convinced that someone broke into her flat.

Background: When she comes home from work, the flat door is not locked and the cabinet door in her bedroom stands open. Also, she had a feeling of being watched in the street this morning. Karen is close to calling the police to report the burglary and characterize the assumed persecutor.

But: Karen suddenly remembers that she overslept and hastily left her flat in the morning. That's why she forgot to close the cabinet door and lock the front door.