**Memory Group- Facilitators Manual**

**Session 3**

**AIMS:**

* To provide an overview of external memory enhancement strategies to aid memory.
* To review participants identified cognitive strengths and areas of difficulty.
* As well as identify external strategies that maximise the use of participants’ strengths while compensating for their difficulties.

**SESSION OUTLINE:**

1. Welcome and Mindfulness exercise
2. Agenda
3. Review previous session and out of session work
4. Exercise 1: communicating my difficulties to others
5. Overview of external memory enhancement strategies
6. Exercise 2: practicing external memory strategies
7. Out of session work & summary

**EQUIPMENT/RESOURCES:**

* Mindfulness CD and CD player
* A3 Print outs
* Workbooks
* Pre-group measures
* Black pens
* Facilitator course folder (individual participant notes)

**Welcome and Mindfulness Exercise (5 minutes)**

Welcome participants to the session.

Remind participants of the grounding exercise that was practiced last session. Reiterate that this we practiced this because when participants come into each session, there may be lots of things on their mind. The aim of the exercise is just to help us be more present ‘in the moment’, and give us some time to become more aware of our thoughts, feelings and any physical sensations. As we’ll see later in the course, this can also support our cognitive functioning and help our memory along with promoting overall well-being. Remind participants that if they have difficulty focusing on the breath (e.g. due to breathing difficulties) then go at a pace that feels comfortable to them, stop the meditation or focus on another part of the body, such as the feet.

*Facilitator to play track 2 on CD.*

**Agenda for today’s session**

Provide an overview on the **A3 Poster** of today’s session plan (as outlined above).

**Review previous session & out of session work (10 minutes)**

Ask participants to provide a brief overview of the previous session. Ensure to recap:

* Overview of process of memory and learning (attention, information processing, encoding, storage, retrieval).
* Overview of different types of memory (i.e. visual, verbal, autobiographical, procedural).
* Why do people experience memory difficulties (e.g. head injury, difficult experience, fatigue).
* How people with memory difficulties are affected.

Ask participants how they found completing the memory self-assessment form 2. What aspect of the process of learning and remembering are they having particular difficulty with? Which strengths did each participant identify? Was there anything that surprised them? It might be useful here to use the results of any cognitive assessments completed with group members to help identify particular strengths/areas of difficulty.

**Exercise 1: Communicating my difficulties to others (10 minutes)**

As we said in the last session, having memory difficulties can impact on our lives in lots of different ways, including our relationships, work, mood and wellbeing. A common problem for people with memory difficulties is thinking about whether and how we might tell other people about our difficulties. Using **the flipchart pen and paper** ask the group to think about the pros and cons of sharing their difficulties with others. Prompt for:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Pros** | **Cons** |
| * Might reduce feelings of isolation * People can support me * Workload can be adjusted at work if necessary * Family/friends might have more realistic expectations of me. * Reduces the stress of trying to hide my difficulties. * Can help with my adjustment to my difficulties. | * People might overestimate or underestimate my difficulties and have too high/low expectations of me. * Social stigma * Could feel more isolated |

Using the **flipchart paper and pens** ask the group who it might be helpful for them to share their difficulties with. Prompt for:

* Family
* Friends
* Work colleagues

**Explain that sometimes it can be difficult to know how to communicate the impact of our difficulties with others. Ask the group to discuss how we might do this.**

**Prompt for the following and then display these on the A3 Poster:**

* **Write down/brain storm the impact of my difficulties (e.g. relationships, doing things, mood etc).**
* **Show family/friends/colleagues the work book/resources at the back of the book.**
* **Take my time writing a letter rather than feeling ‘put on the spot’.**
* **Plan what I’m going to say and carry it with me.**
* **Speak to someone I trust to help me.**

**Overview of external memory enhancement strategies (20 minutes)**

Explain that coping with memory problems can be difficult and requires making new adjustments to your life and way of doing things. But if used consistently, there are lots of different strategies that can help us to recall information. These can be divided into internal strategies and external strategies. Explain that today we will be talking about external strategies, which we can use to support our memory. External memory enhancement strategies are strategies that we use within our environment to aid memory. Using the **flipchart** paper provide an overview of external strategies, as outlined below. Inform group members that there is also an overview of these within the workbook.

**Visual aids**

If you’re likely to remember things that you see, use pictures, drawings and photographs. These can help us to prompt our memory later on.

**Verbal aids**

**If your memory is better for information that you hear it might be useful to use a Dictaphone to describe events of the day, record lectures or meetings or just to make a note of something important. That way if you forget you can listen back to the information to help to jog your memory. There is also computer software and audio versions of books which you can use to listen to rather than relying on reading it.**

**Get organised!**

Getting organised at home is very important for memory. There are lots of different aids that can help us become more organised. If used consistently these aids can make life much easier and puts less strain on your memory. Below are some examples:

* **Folders/files** - Make folders and files for important papers, bills, recipes etc so they’re easier to locate.
* **Sort it** – everything should have its place. Sort drawers, cupboards, shelves etc.
* **Label it** – use labels on drawers, doors, cabinets, files, boxes etc. That way you and others in your house will find it easier to locate and put things away.
* **Diary/Filofax** – using a diary or Filofax can be helpful for remembering what you need to do.
* **Charts/calendars** – Charts and calendars can also be useful for remembering what you need to do. Making these visible around the house is also useful because it helps us to pay attention to them.

**Boards**

**Hanging boards, blackboards or bulletin boards can be helpful for remembering information. These can be strategically placed around the house for remembering information (e.g. in the hallway or on the fridge). You could use this for to do lists, shopping lists, for events or simply to jot down important information.**

**Notes**

Take notes of what you need to remember but try to keep it in one place (i.e. a note pad) so you remember to look. You might want to keep a daily diary of what need to remember. It’s important to write enough that you understand what you need to remember but not too much that it becomes overwhelming and counterproductive.

Demonstrate to the group the importance of keeping the strategies simple. E.g. a journal page overloaded with information and another that has made a note of the most important information and incorporates visual aids as well (see Appendix 3 for examples to display **on the flipchart**).

**Journal**

**A journal can be useful for reflecting back on your day or checking what you did during the day later on if you’re unsure.**

**Post it notes**

Leave post it notes to remind you of things in places that you know you’ll look. For example, you might want to remind yourself to lock the door when you come in at night by putting a post it note next to the door.

**Cues**

**Leaving cues around the house or in other places can also help to jog your memory. For example, if you leave your notebook by the kettle you might be more likely to pick it up in the morning.**

**To do lists**

It might be worth creating a daily ‘to do’ list of things you need to do. You can add to this throughout the day and tick off when each task has been completed.

**Environment**

**Try to eliminate background noise as much as possible to reduce distraction. Turn off the TV or radio and close doors if people are talking, Getting rid of clutter can help to reduce visual distraction. This will help you to have more focused attention rather than dividing your attention.**

**Technology**

With technology continuously changing, new memory aids are constantly developing. Below are some examples of these:

* **phones –** Smart phones have a number of apps and features that can be helpful for remembering information. This includes calendars, reminders, budgeting tools and notes pages for writing lists. Some phones even have ‘memory aid apps’.
* **Tablets/computers –** Also have similar functions to smart phones but are slightly bigger. You can ‘sync’ your devices. This can be useful if other people need access to your information or you use more than one device for different things (e.g. at work, home or when you’re out).
* **Satellite Navigation (SATNAV) –** Can be used if you have difficulty remembering routes. Navigation systems are also available on phones.
* **Location detection devices -** These can be useful if you if you misplace/forget where important things are. They can be attached to keys or other important devices and make a loud sound to help you find it. Mobile phones can also be linked to family and friends so they know your whereabouts if you’re worried getting lost.

**Difficulty**

**When learning something new you should try to pace yourself and start off with simple tasks, gradually increasing their difficulty and length of time spent on the task. This will also help to gradually train your attention.**

**Timing**

Are you a morning person or do you function better later in the day? Try to schedule activities which put higher demands on your attention and memory for the time of day when you function the best.

**Slow down**

**When doing new things or tasks that you know will put high demands on you plan ahead and take your time. For example, if people are talking too quickly or if you don’t understand something ask them to slow down or repeat the information.**

**Breaks**

Ensure that you take regular breaks when learning something new. This will help to take the pressure off you’re your concentration and minimise tiredness and frustration caused by overexerting yourself. It’s also useful to give yourself rewards to look forward to.

**Summary (5minues)**

Ask the group to summaries today’s session and display A3 Poster.

**Out of session work:**

**Practicing external memory strategies (5 minutes)**

Explain to participants that for out of session work, they will be asked to identify an external memory strategy to practice over the next week. Talk through each section of the worksheet in the participant workbook (see below). Participants are asked to identify one main area of difficulty they would like to focus on. They are also asked to identify their strengths, in order to pick a strategy that builds on these. Explain that it will be helpful for participants to look back over the Memory Self-Assessment forms to remind themselves of their strengths and difficulties.

Ensure to prompt participants to also refer to the ‘Useful Strategies’ outlined in boxes in the workbook. This gives an overview of external strategies, which correspond to different areas of difficulty. This may help participants to pick an external strategy and tailor this to their individual needs.

*A3 Poster*