

Cashing In On Your Memory Piggybank

By Sara Graves

Some of us wish we could pay in advance for those moments when our memory fails us. A proverbial memory piggybank where we could deposit all those nuggets of information, one-liners or quips that we hear or read in our e-mail boxes daily, but can never remember when the time is right.

Instead, we are stuck with our occasional failed minds that leave us void when we are trying to recall the latest joke, movie, or words to a really great song on the radio. We laugh them off as blips, hiccups, or senior moments, but inside we are kicking ourselves for forgetting those “unforgettables.”

However, the good news is that our minds are a lot like piggybanks. What you put into them will come out. The question is *when*.

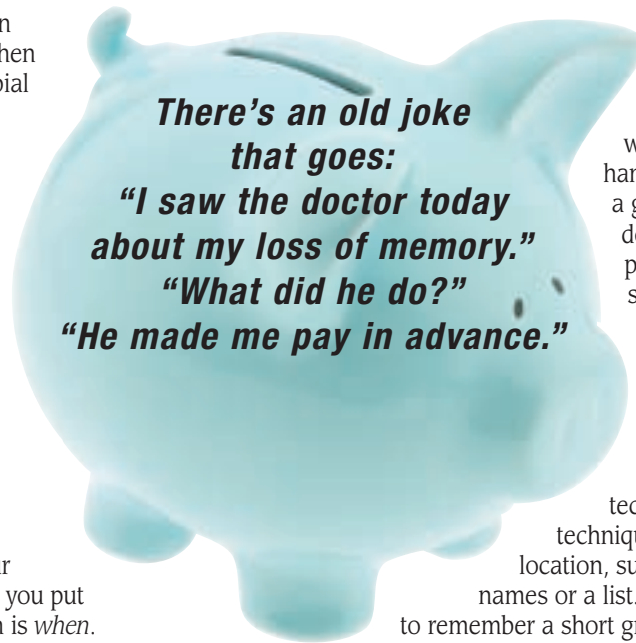
The key to making a quick withdrawal on your mind’s bank is a combination of how well you deposit the information and how well you recall it. To maximize your withdrawal capacity, the following are six tips to improving your overall memory:

1. Our ability to recall details or specifics is the keenest when we take the time to remember the information to begin with. For instance, when meeting someone, if you take the time to repeat their name back to them as they introduce themselves, and conclude your meeting with: “it was so nice to meet you _____,” (insert their name), you are much more likely to remember that person.

2. If you can associate a name to a specific image in your mind, no matter how silly, absurd, or potentially offensive (bald-headed Mike Jones caps Mt. Everest, for example) you will most likely remember that individual’s name. Experts agree that the more outrageous and specific the association, the more likely that you will remember the information. Of course, you want to be careful never to let that association slip out when talking with or about that individual.

3. When creating your associations, try to use all your senses. For instance, if you like how that person smells, or you notice they have stunning green eyes or a powerful handshake, take note of that. Use those details in your associated image.

4. Write it down. Amazingly, few people remember to do this. If you write your associations down on paper shortly after



you meet that person and any details that stood out to you upon your first meeting, you can quickly recall a person’s face when scanning over your notes. If handy, that person’s business card is a great place to write your notes down so you can recall what the person looks like when you are scanning over your business cards. And if you have notes that you want to speak about when you make your next call, write those down.

5. Use a mind-mapping technique. To employ such a technique, you “map” out a familiar location, such as your body, with associated names or a list. For example, if you were trying to remember a short grocery list, instead of just writing down what you need, you would start with your toes and work up to your head. You would associate the first item on your grocery list with your toes and work upward.

If tomatoes were your first item, then you would create a mental image of tomatoes being smashed on your toes. Onions will stink up the room if you squish them between your knees. Beef loin chunks create a nice lei around your neck. Froot Loops® make great earrings.

You would work your list all the way up to your head and use as many specific body parts as necessary to cover each item on your list. By creating such associations in order, you are much more likely to remember your complete grocery list rather than just trying to remember it without such associations.

6. Eat well and exercise daily. What does this have to improving your memory, you ask. Actually, the antioxidants found in fruits and vegetables and the Omega-3 fatty acids, found in such foods as salmon and flaxseed oil, fuel the brain and its vast number of synapse connections, while regular exercise improves circulation and reduces stress to your brain. In addition, taking supplements, such as ginkgo biloba, have shown some promise in improving overall brain activity.

So next time you find yourself racking your brain for that name, title or punch line, just take a deep breath, forgive yourself for the lapse, and remember that the more often you follow the suggestions above, the greater the chance that you will be able to cash in on your memory piggybank when the time is right. **R&NG**