Setting the Climate for Learning

Excerpts from the Attention and Memory Manual by Marna Scarry-Larkin, MA, CCC-SLP

An Introduction to Using the Computer for Therapy

How Does a Computer Work?

The computer has many chips, circuit boards and wires that store and transmit information. In order for the computer to respond to your intentions, it needs to receive information from you.

The information can be put into the computer with a keyboard, a mouse, a touch screen, or even a video camera. The information going in is called, input. The input goes to the central processor in the computer where it is acted upon.

The job of the central processor is to organize and store information. This is called processing information. Once the information is processed it may be stored on an internal drive, displayed on the screen, or played on the speakers.

You can see your information on the screen, hear sounds from the speaker, or print your information. This is called, output.

There are many steps that both you and the computer must do exactly right in order to get the intended result or output. If you miss one of the steps, or if a part of the computer is broken, only part of the information gets to be stored inside the computer or displayed on the screen.

Does that make the computer stupid? No! If all of the input devices are not working properly, it may not have received all of the information . If the processor is broken, it may not have processed the information correctly. If the output devices are faulty, it may have trouble displaying the results of the processes it has completed.

If there is a problem in one or more of the three areas, input, processing, or output, you may have trouble getting information into the computer, processing that information, or getting the information back out of the computer.

How Do I Store Information In My Brain?

Our brains work in a very similar way. Our “input system” is much more complicated than the computer’s keyboard, touch screen or video system. The way information comes into our “system” is through our senses. We see, hear, taste, smell and feel information around us. Computers can’t do that! But, if our processor, the brain, has difficulty sending information back and forth between information areas, some of the information might go to the wrong place, or get lost!

That’s what happens when we forget things or have trouble learning new information. Sometimes brains take in the information correctly, process it just fine, but have trouble with “output “. It can be hard to say or perform what we know! The information is in the brain, but we have trouble getting it out! It can be frustrating to know that you know something, but can’t tell anyone what it is that you know! It can be frustrating to not understand, and it can be frustrating to forget!

Just because we forget something, or don't put the information into a place in the brain where we can find it again, does not make us stupid!

Organizing the brain information doesn't have anything to do with whether you are "smart" or "dumb" or "intelligent" or "slow". It has everything to do with how you organize your brain!

Some brains need more instruction about how to organize. That doesn't make us any less "smart". Just like each computer is different, each brain is different. We all have basically the same potential to store information, but some people store it more efficiently than others. And because they store it more efficiently, they can find the information faster. Suppose I told you to go get your baseball glove. If you don't know exactly where it is, you would have to "search" all the possible places that you could have left your glove. You might search your closet, or under your bed, or in the garage.

Eventually you'll find it because you know, "It is here somewhere!" But, if you always put your baseball glove in the baseball bin in the garage, next to the bat and ball, when I ask you to go get your glove, you can go right to it and bring it back. Let's do some thinking about this. If you don't know where your glove is, does that make you any less "smart'? No! Just less organized.

Can you get more organized inside your brain? Yes! Can it be fun too? Yes! Is it a lot of work? Yes! If you want to make thinking, remembering and concentrating easier for yourself you have to work at it.

How Can A Computer Help Me Learn?

The computer and computer programs are tools you can use to help your brain learn information. We are all familiar with using tools. If I want to get a nail into a wall, I use a hammer. If I want to organize my papers, I put them in a filing cabinet. If I want to get a splinter out, I use tweezers. There are specific tools for every job that I need to do. I don't use a hammer to remove a splinter.

The LocuTour Multimedia CD Attention and Memory Volume I and Volume II were designed to help children and adults organize their brains. Each brain is different and has different ways of organizing information. These CDs were designed to allow the individual to practice information input, processing, and output at their own skill and challenge level. Finally, a tool for cognitive training that is specifically designed to address the problems of attention and memory at various skill levels!