

PRACTICE

Here in the second part of the book we provide information about what factors to consider before training, during training, and after training. We also present practical tips and materials that can be used in connection with the working memory training. Further we give our thoughts on how motivation can be maintained during the whole training period and what to consider when evaluating the training. Finally, we present two case descriptions to demonstrate how working memory training can be conducted in practice.

TO TRAIN WORKING MEMORY

To train successfully with Memory Quest, careful preparations are essential. For maximum impact, it is important that the entire training period is carried out and that the person training is constantly trying to perform to his or her best ability. In the chapter “training materials” are checklists and charts, etc., that are meant to be an aid to training with Memory Quest.

Before you begin training, it is advisable to go through the training materials to ensure that no details of the planning have been forgotten. To get a clearer picture of how training materials can be practically applied, you can read the case descriptions in the next chapter.

We generally recommend that also adults who are going to train have someone who can help with preparations. If this is not possible or if you do not think it suits you, it is of course possible to train alone, but this puts higher demands concerning planning, motivation and endurance.

HOW DOES THE TRAINING WORK?

The actual training consists of a number of computerized exercises. The difficulty of the exercises is automatically adjusted to the individual's performance, so that the load on working memory is always at an optimal level. The first time someone trains, we recommend an exercise program that includes 20 or 25 training sessions. Each training session takes between 15 and 40 minutes depending on the selected programme, age and individual factors such as reaction time and how many items the individual is able to remember. During each training week 4-5 training sessions should be carried out resulting in a total duration of 5-7 weeks. If the trainee has experienced a positive effect from the training and wants do an additional

training period, it is a possible option. However, we recommend that the second training period begins no earlier than three months after the initial training period is completed.

COACH

The coach's main function is to help the person training to maintain motivation throughout the training by continuous support and feedback. The trainee will very likely, sometime during the training, complain that it is hard to train and show signs of reduced motivation. There are various ways to help the trainee to get through these motivational dips and to train even though it is inconvenient. However there is no general method that works for everyone. Each individual is motivated by different things and it is important that you trust your own teaching skills and use your experience of working with the person that you are supervising. The goal is that the trainee maintains maximum effort and continues training throughout the training period. It is best if one person can be responsible for training during the entire period to provide continuity, but also because the coach will then get a good understanding of what facilitates training for that trainee.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRAINING WITH CHILDREN AND ADULTS

The role of coach usually differs between training children or adults. When a child is training, it is often necessary for the coach to sit with the child, actively providing support. The child often needs to have a coach present to maintain focus and concentration. As a coach of children it is worth maintaining praise for their endurance, reassuring them that they are trying their best. Furthermore, it is common that after a while the child gets used to the positive reinforcements that are included in the program so positive verbal reinforcement from the coach can be critical for continued motivation. The extent to which you need to be active varies from child to child and it is important to be sensitive to the needs of the particular child you are training with. The same applies to coaching an adult; your role as a coach can vary a great deal depending on the needs of the person training. Most adults manage to train alone, while some adults with special needs benefit from having the coach next to them. Regardless of how the support during the training is designed it is always good as coach to help with preparations and evaluation, and to continuously monitor the training process to make sure that all training is carried out.

LOCATION

Sometimes your choices are limited as regards the location for memory training. As with everything else you have to be realistic and make the best of what is available.

Perhaps the most important thing to consider when choosing location for training is that it is quiet. Preferably choose a secluded place where no one will turn up unannounced. If it happens that someone tries the door during training or that people often knock it quickly becomes an annoyance and something that will cause the trainee to lose concentration. Some of the time that could have been spent on training will be wasted. A good tip is to put a sign on the door such as "Memory training in progress, do not disturb!"

It is also good to have as bare of a room as possible. The fewer visual distractors the easier it is to focus. If training takes place in the home it may therefore be a good idea to clear the room chosen for training before the actual training begins. If possible training should, for the same reason, always be in the same room. This will create a safe environment with a limited number of new impressions and all the focus can be placed on training.



*TO FACILITATE CONCENTRATION ON TRAINING IT CAN BE WISE TO REMOVE
DISTRACTING OBJECTS*

CONTINUITY

Continuity is a key word that should permeate the entire training. Ideally, the training should take place the same time of day, in the same room, with the same coach for each training session. Ability to concentrate can vary from day to day, but also depending on what time it is. Just before lunch, when blood sugar levels are low, or right after lunch when digestion is at work are times you should avoid memory training if possible. The same applies in the afternoon when a school day/business day draws to an end. It is best for most people to train in the morning; for example in the case of children to train shortly after they have started school. However, it is important to remember to always adjust the time according to what works best for the trainee. Always training at the same time of day means that similar conditions will be given for all training sessions. The risk of irregular training is that some days training will be carried out when memory ability is at its peak and some days when it is at its lowest; this can affect how it feels to train. If you have been training on Monday at a time when you feel that you cope well and then train on Tuesday after lunch and physical education the risk is that the training is less fun and that it is difficult to do one's best. It is a great advantage to train when individuals feel refreshed and alert in order to create a positive atmosphere for the training.

The coach has an important role in the success of working memory training, and by always having the same coach it is easier to keep track of developments in the training. As coach, you learn what kind of feedback works best, and when an individual needs the most support.

MOTIVATION

Motivation is central to memory training to have as good an effect as possible. A central aim of this book is to give you, as coach, relevant information about working memory. We hope it can help create a proper motivation in you as coach. It is also important to convey information to the trainee and to important people around them, so the training feels meaningful for everyone involved. If everyone involved is motivated, this will contribute to a better atmosphere for the training and increase the likelihood that training will be conducted well.