



Rehabilitate Foundational Attention Skills

It's a vexing combination—the frontal lobe of the brain is extremely vulnerable to injury and it plays a major role in cognition, language, executive function, and behavior. Even mild injury to this region can affect the ability to perform activities at pre-injury levels.

Processes of attention form the foundation for all other cognitive processes. Attention is necessary for memory processing and for linguistic and nonlinguistic perception and comprehension. Fortunately, cognitive retraining for attention and memory results in better patient outcomes.

There are five components of attention.

1. Focused Attention—the ability to respond discretely to particular visual, auditory, or tactile stimuli
2. Sustained Attention—the ability to sustain a steady response during continuous activity
3. Selective Attention—the ability to maintain attention in the face of distracting or competing stimuli
4. Alternating Attention—the capacity for mental flexibility that allows the shift of focus between tasks
5. Divided Attention—the ability to respond simultaneously to multiple tasks or to do more than one activity at a time

The effectiveness of speech and language intervention for specific cognitive deficits (e.g., attention, memory, executive functions) is supported by scientific and clinical evidence. In a summary of treatment efficacy for cognitive-communication disorders secondary to TBI in adults, Coelho et al. (1996) reported improvement in control group subjects who received cognitive retraining for attention, memory, and problem-solving skills.

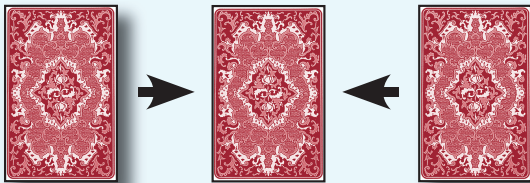
Use these exercises from CARDS Attention to improve attention skills in your clients.

Exercise 1

Skill: Sustained Attention

Setup: Split a deck of cards into two equal stacks. Place one stack to the left of midline facedown. Place the other stack to the right of midline facedown.

Procedure: The client moves the cards from the two decks to form a single stack in the middle by taking one card from the right and then one from the left.

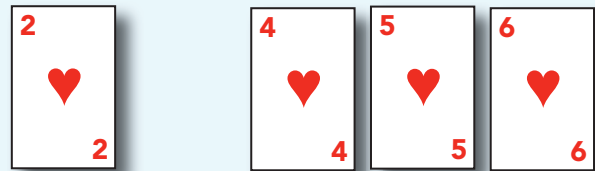


Exercise 2

Skill: Selective Attention

Setup: Give the client a complete deck of cards faceup and name a suit.

Procedure: The client goes through the deck, one card at a time, looking for cards in the named suit and placing them faceup on the table. Cards in the other suits go to the bottom of the deck. As the client places cards on the table, she puts them in a sequence from low to high.



Coelho, C.A., DeRuyter, F., Stein, M. (1996). Treatment efficacy: Cognitive-communicative disorders resulting from traumatic brain injury in adults. *JSHR*, 39, S5-S17.

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