

What is Attention?

- Attention is a thinking process that involves being alert and focusing on information in the environment or on our thoughts.
- After mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) and concussion, changes in attention can make it harder to focus on what's important.
- There are different types of attention that we switch between every day. For example, at times you might need to stay focused on one thing. Or, there may be times when you might need to switch your attention between more than one thing.
- Paying attention involves different levels of thinking effort depending on the type of attention.
- Other things like pain, being tired, stress, or noisy places can make paying attention harder.
- You can find tips on strategies to address these areas that can affect attention at <https://www.myshepherdconnection.org/mild-tbi-concussion/mind-and-body/thinking>

How can I improve my Attention?

- Using tools to pay attention can help you feel in control and focus better. Tips to help stay focused include:
 - Limit distractions. Do things like turn off the TV, turn off your phone when you need to focus, or work in a quiet room with the door shut when you need to pay attention.
 - Do one thing at a time. Finish what you are doing before starting something new.
 - Break bigger tasks into smaller, easier steps.
 - When you do need to change between tasks, say to yourself what you are doing to help stay focused or leave notes to remember where you left off.
 - Pay attention to whether you are paying attention. Check in with yourself often.
 - Use "self-talk" to stay in the moment and focused. Ask yourself questions like, "Is my mind wandering?" or "Am I focusing on what is most helpful to me right now?"
 - Use timers on your watch, fitness tracker or phone to remind you to take breaks or to check in on whether you are staying on task.
 - Relax to help get your mind ready to focus. Try deep breathing, stretching, going for a short walk, or listening to music.
 - Do things that need more attention to detail when you have the most energy.

What can others do to help?

- Ask the person what tools they use to support their attention and how they prefer to get help.
- Have conversations in areas that are quiet and not too busy.
- Allow time for enough rest breaks to reduce the load on their brain.
- Make eye contact when you are talking to get their attention.
- Reduce giving a lot of instructions or information quickly at one time.
- Look for signs that the person you are supporting is losing their focus.
- Reduce clutter at home if you live in the same household.
- Be patient and remember that attention problems are a common symptom after concussion and using these tools is an important part of the recovery process.

Additional Comments: