

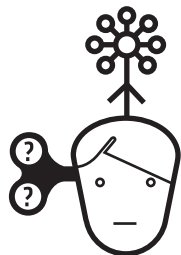


PROFESSOR ARTHUR SHIMAMURA'S A WHOLE-BRAIN LEARNING APPROACH FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS



MOTIVATE

We need to be motivated to use energy to keep focused on the learning process. Designed well, motivation can be intrinsic to learning, for example, by generating curiosity, framing new material as a quest to answer big questions, organising ideas within a wider schema, story-telling and asking the ‘aesthetic question’: *“What do you think? How does it make you feel? Why is it good?”* *“The aesthetic question engages emotional brain circuits and forces us to attend to and organize our knowledge.”*



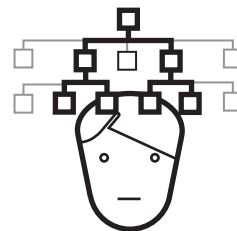
ATTEND

Academic learning is a ‘top-down’ activity whereby we consciously attend to the information needed to build our schema from all the stimuli we’re exposed to. This is hard so ‘mind wandering’ is common and teachers need to expect it. Ideally students will consciously attend to the learning goals and consciously make connections – but sometimes an instructor needs grab attention, acting as their students’ prefrontal cortex to direct their top-down processing.



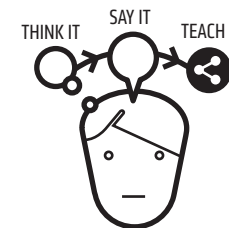
RELATE

Shimamura offers numerous biological insights about how we store and connect information through memory consolidation. The practical strategies include deploying elaborative-interrogative questioning – asking how and why – using mental images, analogies, constructing concept maps as schematic representations of sets of connected ideas and training students to make notes organised in hierarchical structures.



GENERATE

Shimamura suggests: *“Think it, say it, teach it! These are the simplest things to do to improve your memory”*. He details multiple ways in which our memories are strengthened when we generate information from our memory, not simply restating it but using our own words. If we tell someone what we’ve learned we can improve our memory by 30-50%. Explained in terms of brain functions, Generate reinforces the widely known retrieval practice concept.



EVALUATE

This is the territory of metacognition with a nice metaphor of the prefrontal cortex acting as the conductor of the orchestra of brain functions. There’s a problem with the illusion of knowing when we are familiar with information even when we cannot fully recollect it. We stop trying to learn more if we kid ourselves into thinking we already know it. Students should, therefore, be taught to check their understanding using spaced retrieval practice, generating information by explaining their learning to others as a form of self-test.

