

Writing for therapy handout

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Test Your Working Memory

There are many kinds of working memory tests. Below is a simple one that you can try on your own.

First, take 30 seconds or so and examine the follow sequence of numbers, trying to remember them:

1 3 2 3 7 4 8 2 5 9 6

Next, get ready to close the book—you are going to picture your three favourite animals, one after the other, for 5 seconds each, and then try to recall the original list of numbers—in order. You can write the numbers down on a scrap of paper. If you want a challenge, try to recall them in reverse order (the last number first, and so forth). Go ahead and try it, then come back to the book when you are done.

All done? Compare what you were able to recall with the numbers above. The more numbers you can recall, the better your working memory. In particular, if you can recall the numbers in order, you have a good working memory. Most people can recall about half of the numbers in order, with very few being able to recall them all.

What is interesting about tests such as these is that people do more poorly when they are under a great deal of stress than when they are stress free. Similarly, people who are depressed or ruminating about upsetting experiences perform more poorly on working memory tests.

At home Activity:

Diaries can be used to help us discover happiness.

After this presentation re read some of your entries and take note of the mood of your writing.

Make a list of what aspects of your life you include in your diary.

Make a list of what you don't include in your diary.

Experiment with using positive elements in your diary.

