

# INTRODUCTION

It is the first night of class. I am looking over the list of participants. Seven teachers are in the “extra” class I agreed to teach this semester. The other class I am teaching is full, and I agreed to teach another session. My colleagues are warming up to the idea that perhaps some information on memory would be helpful both personally and professionally. I like having small classes so that the participants get to know each other better, and I can give them individual attention. I am always amazed at how many people are worried about their memories. But, of course, I realize that the only reason I am teaching this “Memory 101” class is because at one time I thought my memory was in trouble.

Years ago, as those ugly words *middle age* started approaching—at a mere forty-five years old—I found myself forgetful. All the appointments I used to keep in my head and had never forgotten, the phone numbers, and the birthdays—they weren’t gone, but I found myself having to look some up. And when I missed a doctor’s appointment, I thought it was all over!

So, the research began. I’ve always been a teacher. I started out in kindergarten but found my niche with older students as I moved up to middle and high school before I started teaching at a nearby university. I really enjoy doing research and have always been happy with the results of that research: knowledge, confidence, and an “edge” in my work and my personal life.

The memory research is compelling. As we age, there may be a little decline in some areas, but nothing major (Bloom, Beal, & Kupfer, 2003). I discovered that my outlook on life and my attitude toward my memory could play a role in how well my brain and my memory work. I applied the simple principles with my students and within my personal life. When the school district asked me to offer a memory class for the teachers, I jumped at the chance to design Memory 101. The title comes from a course of the same name offered at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, a teaching hospital affiliated with Harvard Medical

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School (Haddock, 2001). I thought it would be a catchy title, and it certainly gets straight to the point. As educators, we should understand memory, so it's time for some of this background knowledge to be shared.

### **THE PARTICIPANTS**

As I look at the list, I like the diversity: a P.E. teacher, a music teacher, two primary school teachers, a middle school language arts teacher, a high school science teacher, and a librarian. Dealing with memory problems and memory fears affects everyone.

"Okay," I think to myself, "if I want to assure these people that good memories are within their grasps, I'd better make sure that I know these names." I intentionally ask for a picture to accompany the registration. As a classroom teacher, knowing my students' names on the first day of school made them feel good about themselves and increased their confidence in me. I always studied the school yearbook each summer to learn the names of students in my incoming classes.

Gail Kilpatrick, a thirty-seven-year-old with shoulder-length blonde hair and high cheekbones, teaches high school science. She's afraid the periodic table of the elements will fade from her mind like so many other things! She is also concerned about her students forgetting information from one day to the next.

Jack Burns, a forty-seven-year-old P.E. teacher, has long dark hair and amazing blue eyes. Jack just started having memory problems.

Grace Jorgenson, fourth-grade teacher, has brown curly hair and wears rimless glasses. She's fifty-three and has short-term memory concerns.

Alice Belts has been a stay-at-home mom for twenty years, and now she is working as a librarian again. Alice can't remember where she puts things, and she's amazed at what the students forget.

Dr. David Schwarts, the music teacher for the high school, looks very professional with his silver hair around the temples and his horn-rimmed glasses. He has a soothing smile. David's forgetting appointments with students.

John Otis, a fair-haired middle school language arts teacher with blue eyes and a wicked smile, is fifty-two years old. He's been worried about his own memory for two years. He forgets what he just said and has to backtrack when he is giving students instructions. He is also disappointed in the test results he is getting from his students.

Ava Brophy is a beautiful African American woman who has been teaching third grade for thirty years. Ava finds herself missing appointments and misplacing her keys. She wants to be sure that she does nothing to jeopardize her students.

“I think I’ve got it,” I say to myself as I prepare a small table with participants’ names and a symbol to act as a mnemonic aid. “Okay, I’m ready. Will you join us?”

<b>Ava</b>	<b>Grace</b>	<b>Alice</b>	<b>David</b>	<b>Jack</b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Gail</b>	<b>You</b>
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