

# Psychosis and Cognition



Many people who experience psychosis notice changes to their cognition. Cognition refers to our “thinking skills.” Cognition is different than intelligence—people can be very intelligent but still experience issues with cognition.

Some areas that can be affected by psychosis include **attention** (our ability to focus), **memory** (storing and recalling information), **processing speed** (how quickly we think), and **executive functioning** (our ability to problem solve, organize, and complete tasks).

## What do changes to cognition look like in everyday life?

- I forget the details of a conversation
- I can't keep track of appointments
- I can't focus on school or work
- It takes me longer to do things than before
- I need more breaks than I used to
- It takes me longer to learn new skills

## Getting Support Around Cognitive Concerns

- **Share your concerns with your healthcare team:**  
This will help them monitor your progress and determine the best way to help you.
- **Request an assessment:**  
Sometimes it can be helpful to have a psychologist or occupational therapist assess your thinking. This can identify your strengths and areas that could use some extra support. It can also suggest strategies that might work best for you
- **Learn coping strategies:**  
Working with your healthcare team, you can learn strategies to help reduce the impact of cognitive challenges. For example, using a calendar or reminders on your phone if you have difficulty remembering appointments. Check out some helpful tips below!
- **Cognitive remediation:**  
Some healthcare services offer a treatment called 'cognitive remediation' to support thinking skills. You can ask your healthcare team if it's available in your area.

# Cognitive Strategies

1

**Chunking:** grouping things (objects, words, ideas) in some way that is related, so when you recall information you can remember groups of items instead of each one individually.

**Examples:**

- When studying for an exam, group information by related topics
- Create acronyms or phrases to help you remember. For example ROY G BIV represents the colours of the rainbow (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet)

2

**Removing Distractions:** Change the environment and the things around you so distractions are less likely. Don't try to multitask, focus on doing one thing at time.

**Examples:**

- Turn off your phone, put it on silent or put it in another location
- Use noise cancelling headphones
- Move to a quieter, less busy room or environment

3

**Using Supports:** helping yourself to improve performance by using external supports that help you work around cognitive challenges.

**Examples:**

- Setting an alarm to help remind or prompt you
- Write things down that you want to remember
- Ask a trusted person for support (for example to help remind you of something or help you practice a task)