

## Stretch Out and Ask More of Your Brain

With the flip of a switch you have light. Simply press the right app and you have music. Wouldn't it be great to snap your fingers to think more creatively, to possess insight or a photographic memory, to have advanced communication or problem solving skills, to increase concentration or be more resilient?

Anything is possible. You just need to stretch out and ask more of your brain. How do you do that? Other than dancing, cooking or the daily activities mentioned early how can you shake things up?

In the next few pages we offer many suggestions. Some may be unfamiliar to you. If an activity is unfamiliar, introducing incremental changes does challenge your brain. Just remember do not make it too easy because the exercises or challenges are most effective when you do something your brain is not expecting. The exercises or activities are not scary or difficult. Mostly you choose to do things that are new, varied or more challenging than your daily routine.

You could stretch your thinking or imagination to view an idea or possibility in a different light. You could stretch one minute into five to become more aware or curious of your surroundings or be more engaging with people. Stretching out might be altering just one thing within your environment while performing day-to-day activities.

We understand the patience and time needed to perform any of these exercises, but isn't it worthwhile if you are enhancing your cognitive abilities? Who knows you might enjoy them.

Let's review some recommended "stretching out" strategies:

- 1) Keep Learning
- 2) Solve problems
- 3) Extend Boundaries
- 4) Day Dream
- 5) Learn to Play
- 6) Stretch Your Imagination
- 7) Be Curious and Stay Curious
- 8) Practice Creativity
- 9) Alliteration
- 10) Stand-Up Comedy
- 11) Karaoke
- 12) Dancing
- 13) Friends are Good for your Mind
- 14) Train Those Awareness Muscles by Consciously Choosing
- 15) Be mindful
- 16) Listen more Attentively and Actively
- 17) Be Observant
- 18) Use your Mind's Eye

## Stretch out Strategy #1 – Keep Learning



The pursuit of education keeps your brain alert. Keeping mentally active stimulates communication among the various parts of your brain. Learning real life skills is a great way to enhance brain power, but you should not become complacent once you attain proficiency. The only way to continue to stimulate your brain is to expand a learning experience at the next level of difficulty or try something more challenging or entirely different like a new hobby or field of study. . The key is to step out of your brain's comfort zone. Learning languages, playing musical instruments, or engaging in strategy games like bridge or chess are ideal pursuits that keep challenging the brain because there is always more to learn in such activities. Wake up every new day eager to learn something new.

## Stretch out Strategy #2 – Solve problems

It is a great stretching exercise to solve problems, complex ones. Not just the problems that you encounter or are tasked to solve, but exploring how to solve problems that exist around you. This challenge forces you to use the logical, analytical, objective, intuitive, and subjective parts of you brain to formulate the optimal solution or multiple solutions. Besides deliberating over these complex problems you can stretch the exercise by mapping out the step of the problem, writing down the details and drawing analytical diagrams or charts.



Every academic subject and all aspects of life involve problem solving skills. Developing problem solving skills instill confidence and independence while stimulating your brain.

- Verbal intelligence problems
- Math & probability problems
- Lateral thinking problems
- Visual spatial intelligence problems
- Logical intelligence problems
- Pattern recognition problems

### Stretch out Strategy #3 – Extend Boundaries

You can extend the boundaries of learning and experiences and stimulate those synapses to keep firing by exercising the brain in unexpected ways. Novel, challenging, and complex activities trigger release of dopamine, the “motivation” neurotransmitter, as well as promote the creation of new neurons. Many of the following challenges only take a few minutes:

- Many people have jobs that keep them mentally active. However pursuing a hobby, learning a new skill, or volunteering for a stimulating project where you need to acquire new skills functions much the same way.
- You stimulate mental growth when you challenge your current way of thinking. Challenge your own ideas and long held viewpoints by becoming more analytical or critical to see things in different light. Instead of simply accepting and archiving information passed along to you or allowing your first interpretation to guide you question or probe for deeper insight. Stretch the exercise through writing, rereading and revising these ideas, or probing still deeper.
- Your senses work to engage your attention. The more senses you utilize in learning something new, the more alert you brain is to the details and to retaining the memory. When you explore something new you should try to engage all your senses in non-routine ways.
- You can force your brain to use new neural pathways by doing chores with your eyes closed, without putting oneself at risk: taking a shower, shampooing hair, sorting laundry by feel, doing dishes, putting groceries away.
- You can extend the boundary of any brain challenge by choosing to do things in a more difficult way. You can start by not relying on convenient technology, like calculators, smart phones, or GPS. You can use your brain for spelling, math, finding directions, memorizing addresses and phone numbers, recipes, or lists.
- You can stretch difficult to a new level by hanging things like clocks and calendars upside down or backwards, using the phone or wearing a watch upside down, reading with a mirror or practicing to write backwards, learning to recite the alphabet backwards or sitting on the opposite side of the board to play chess or checkers.
- You stretch out of your comfort zone when you engage in a hobby that is totally out of character to what you normally do, especially if it involves some type of motor skills: needlepoint or origami instead of boisterous athletic activities, learning sculpting or tai chi instead of reading.



### Stretch out Strategy #4 – Daydream

Numerous regions of your brain are highly active during daydreaming. Even the part of your brain associated with complex problem solving shows increased activity when you daydream.

Daydreaming is best done in a peaceful place with no distractions.

Try imagining all the things that would make you happy and putting them into a story. Build on the story each time you daydream.

When you first practice daydreaming, keeping the characters consistent will make expanding the story easier when imagining different surroundings. Keep your stories and situations positive.

### Stretch out Strategy #5 – Learn to Play

Playing is widely credited as a vital part of human development, with studies linking play to creativity, imagination, cognitive and emotional strength, as well as improving social skills and the way they engage with the world.

Playing isn't just beneficial to children either – while there haven't been many studies into playfulness in adults, recent research found playful people were more likely to be good at observing, see things from new perspectives, be more innovative and have lower stress levels.

### Stretch out Strategy #6 – Stretch Your Imagination

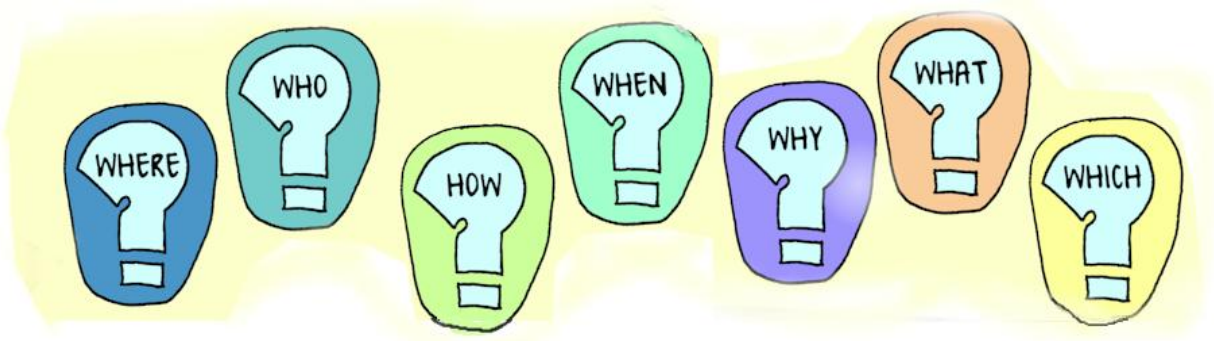
Aim to do innovative exercises for your brain that force you to act or think differently.

- Constantly try to improve your ideas. Explore all approaches even when you have found promising ones.
- Challenge your assumptions. Since most first impressions, views, or impulses are biased toward your usual way of thinking, try viewing a situation in at least three different ways to get a deeper understanding. Try arguing your assumption as the devil's advocate to test the strength of your arguments.
- Escalate, accelerate, exaggerate, recreate, moderate – rather than look at a scene or at something look into it, study it, question it, restructure it. Change the construct of what you see, hear, taste, smell, or feel.
- Use brainstorming or creative problem solving techniques to expand your thoughts and ideas. You might coordinate brainstorming sessions within a group or try solitary brainstorming where you list or diagram your thoughts on a subject – try mind maps, free writing, word association, free speaking – then review what you have, make additions or streamline what you have recorded.
- Don't let a good idea get away. Make sure you record all your ideas, even those that seem silly or you don't think you will ever forget. Your mind, alert or at sleep, will use and juggle this collection of ideas into a rich network that your mind can later draw upon for creative innovation.

## Stretch out Strategy #7 – Be Curious and Stay Curious

Nonstop curiosity is great exercise for your brain. You can expand how you think or ask questions about just about anything: a news story, career, places, people, their viewpoints, history, or interesting trivia.

Charles Darwin was a master of curiosity and concentration. His tenacious curiosity caused him to spend hours staring at animals and plants, questioning and examining their characteristics and behaviours. He was able to see so many details that others simply didn't notice.



For the most part people are able to decide what they want to focus their attention on. Try this simple experiment to test how staying curious about the object of your attention can prolong your ability to stay focused on it:

- Pick a dot any dot on a piece of paper or wall. Try to focus on that dot. You'll probably find that one of two things will occur. One, you may find your field of vision becomes blurred and you see nothing distinct, or two you may find that you have actually ceased to look at the dot in question and you actually looking at something else nearby.
- The way to remain focused on the dot is to be curious about that particular dot and transform that curiosity into specific questions about it. How big is it? How far away? Is it perfectly rounded or could it be another shape? What shade of color? Is it smooth or bumpy? Why does it have texture? How long has it been there? How did it get there? By thinking about the dot in various ways and associating it with different characteristics you can keep your mind on it for a comparatively longer time.

The more curious you are about a subject, the greater the stamina of your concentration will be.

That is true for any endeavor. Curiosity and focus can enhance other meaningful attributes such as your attention span, powers of observation, patience, and resourcefulness. Curiosity intersects with focus. Focus and curiosity spark insightful questions from which fresh ideas grow. Your ingenuity originates from curiosity.



### Stretch out Strategy #8 – Practice Creativity

Typically, when we hear the word "creative" we think about the world of art where the freedom of interpretation and expressions stems from loose rules which are often broken at the artist's discretion to generate drawing, writing, sculpture, photography, music, design, theatre, comedy, dance, you name it. People that demonstrate above average creative skills probably practice more than the average person.

You are born with your creative juices flowing. Creativity is one of the most important characteristics of being human. As a species we thrive through our creative juices. It is one of the main traits that make us successful as individuals and as a species. On some level, nearly everyone falls into the creative spectrum of inventors, entrepreneurs, fine artists and thought leaders. Anyone that can turn an idea into action or exploit opportunities is creative.

You may not feel particularly creative or may not judge yourself as having creative skills. However, at its core creativity exists in many different forms and is fundamentally about your mental capacity to generate novel and useful ideas or solve problems. It is about how you develop, understand and communicate ideas in every realm of your life. The fact is creativity is an integral part of your daily life.



You may not recognize things that are creative in your daily activities: managing a tight budget, planning a party, finding a new route to avoid a traffic jam, choosing the day's wardrobe, furnishing a room, taking a photograph, solving an everyday problem. Anytime you show flexibility in perception or execution of a task or tell a story (factual or fictional) you demonstrates creativity. While some of your creative endeavors may not have a place in a professional setting, they are most definitely stimulated by your creative juices.

Research studies have shown that as young children we are characteristically at about a 98% level of high creativity. As we proceed through our school years we learn non-creative behaviors or can unwittingly get boxed into a specific role that encourages us to think practically instead of creatively. When we stop exploiting our creative mind and talents, our level of creativity can drop from 98% to 12%, so that by the time we are fifteen years old many of us stop practicing creativity. Our synchronized world with rules and regulations is counterproductive to fueling our imagination, daydreaming, or encouraging us to think differently. It has influenced us to frown upon such things as imperfection. Although there is nothing perfect in this world tend to believe that our ideas, designs, or handiwork must be flawless and worthy of competitive greatness. Against the odds of achieving the idea of perfection our curiosity and creative efforts decline.

Yet, today creativity is a crucial skill for people in all fields and walks of life. Creativity and innovation have become strategic priorities in the modern business world. To encourage resourcefulness, originality, or imagination many global businesses practice the "20% rule" meaning they encourage their employees to set aside twenty percent of their work time to exploring new ideas and thinking creatively. In other words the individuals get to practice creativity.

Every creative thing you undertake results in more creative connections in your brain, which leads to more resourcefulness in the future. Practicing creativity through targeted exercises requires no particular talent and it's not a competition. The focus is on the creative process, the spirit of exploring creativity rather than on producing a specific product or the expectation of producing anything 'good'. It is just exercising your brain to develop your untapped and underdeveloped creative attributes which allows you to access the full scale of your creative capabilities and unleash new potential.

In any creativity exercise we encourage you to let those creative juices flow to take them someplace, anyplace – break all the rules, create anything, high caliber or questionable. In fact, there are no rules and no passing or failing marks. We ask you to think outside the box, way outside the box, distort any fact or alter any conventional thinking. By thinking outlandishly, by mixing nonsensical and discerning ideas you learn to develop an inspired, inventive, and creative frame of mind. The simple act of thinking differently, unconventionally or from a different perspective excites your brain in new ways.

One starting exercise could be to study things in new ways, as if you were going to repurpose or reinvent them. For example, you can examine any possession, or object in your environment to figure out how that item can be turned into something interesting, useful, or bizarre. The goal is not to think of obvious things, but to try thinking way beyond the obvious and be absurd. For example: Can this gravy be used as a glue?

Besides thinking of only reasonable questions, asking illogical questions and coming up with equally bizarre responses stimulates your brain. What else could this become? What else is like this? Can I combine it with another item to create something new? What can be added, subtracted, rearranged, reversed, or altered? Can I change the color, shape, sound, or smell? How can I put this to other uses? What might be puzzling about this object? What's out of place? What analogies can I make? What associations can I make? Could this item represent the solution to any problem? Does this item annoy me?

One of the best ways to practice creativity is to play. An adult who has lost his or her creative spark can learn to be creative through learning to play again, to retrieve that child's sense of wonder. Children play with ideas to explore them, not for any immediate practical purpose, but just for the enjoyment. Adults can too.

Vary your creative thinking and projects in order to use both your mind and your motor skills. Work on constructive projects that vary in length from a few minutes to a few hours. Your brain benefits from short term creative projects. One day you can dream up some fun lyrics, and the next you can write in your journal, paint, draw, or craft something interesting. Creative projects that involve more planning, preparation or attention to detail may be more dynamically beneficial. Join a drama club, write poetry, or play an instrument. Try woodworking, making jewelry, or scrapbooking. Create a board game, instructional video, or redecorate your space. Many art projects such as painting, model ship building, and jewelry-making demand visual spatial skills, being able to understanding complex designs, follow written instructions or memorize techniques and patterns. Completing a project requires you to concentrate on the activity and use motor skills for physical completion. The key is to stretch your creativity beyond your previous creative experience.

### Stretch out Strategy #9 – Alliteration

Try an alliterative challenge. Pick a subject and a letter of the alphabet and create an alliterative sentence or paragraph that is relevant to the subject. Example #1: The subject is the British musical group the Beatles and the letter is "B". The alliterative result:

*Beautiful boys, the Beatles, bobbing and bouncing 'bout Britain, to brandish their musical brilliance, before buoyed and buzzing buffs, boldly begging autographs from behind British bobbies buffering the Beatles from abuse.*



The result of your alliterative effort does not have to be a highly acclaimed literary accomplishment. It is a fun exercise meant to push your mind in a search for alliterative words that can be assembled into an appearance of making some kind of sense.



### Stretch out Strategy #10 – Stand-up Comedy

If you have the thirst for it, stand-up comedy is a great challenge for your brain. There is pressure, but it can be fun. Even if you never get to deliver your lines on a professional stage, creating a comedy act would be an excellent challenge for your brain.

Stand-up comedy requires a variety of skills. What seems like a one-sided conversation is really a type of multifaceted conversation because you must orchestrate a routine that anticipates and engages the audience. Besides creating a persona and being able to present yourself effectively on stage, you need to think creatively, select appropriate material, have writing ability, planning and communications skills and a good memory. You have to become cognizant of how your performance might be affected by microphones, cameras, lighting techniques, stage hands, or different sets and locations. To perform to an audience requires playfulness and an intuitive sense of timing. You have to be able to read the mood and reactions of your listeners and think quickly to improvise and think quickly respond to events decisively and effectively. You must be capable of receiving criticism and have the ability to work with different people.

### Stretch out Strategy #11 – Karaoke

Singing karaoke exercises different parts of your brain: your memory when you remember the lyrics and the melody; language when you read the lyrics and perform, mood and creativity in your interpretation of the song and in any personal associations or memories the tune might remind you of from previous experience. You can stretch your imagination and creativity by making up lyrics to music that you like.

### Stretch out Strategy #12 – Dancing or Form of Movement with Dance-Like Characteristics

The basis of dance is rhythm, but it is first and foremost a stimulating mental activity that connects mind to body. You can dance solo or you can dance with a partner, or in a group. If dancing does not appeal to you there are other forms of human movement that have dance-like characteristics. These include martial arts, gymnastics, tai chi, cheerleading, figure skating, synchronized swimming, yoga, couples yoga, marching bands, color guard, and many other forms of athletics.



They are all complex activities that really work the brain. Here's why:

- Dance requires co-ordination, flexibility, and motor control.

- Dance involves an alternation of moves from left to right, forward and backward, rise and fall or bilateral symmetry
- Dance increases awareness of where all parts of the body are in space.
- Dance focuses attention on eyes, ears and touch as tools to assist in movement and balance.
- Dance usually involves a repertoire of coordinated moves.
- Dance can be theatrical, cultural, or social.
- Choreography in dance requires creativity, memorization, and concentration.
- Dance requires time-keeping.
- Dance requires a level of body fitness and breathing techniques.
- Dance involves creativity, along with an understanding of music and dance techniques to interpret and respond with appropriate moves.
- Dance can have strict rules or be open to personal interpretation.
- Dance can tell a story when the dancer responds to the music with a combination of mime, mood and graceful movement.
- Skills are tested with each dancing partner.
- Dancing requires a blend of leadership and cooperation.
- Skills are tested with different tempos, genres, of music.

The challenge in dancing is learning new techniques, new moves, and applying those skills to different music. Add dimension to the challenge by choreographing your own dance routines.

### Stretch out Strategy #13 – Friends are Good for Your Mind

We humans are designed for social interaction. The impact of any brain-building exercise is heightened when you involves social interaction. It turns out that being sociable is just as important as diet, exercise, other lifestyle factors, and cognitive exercises. Friends help keep your brain healthy.

Socializing requires complex communication skills that involve different brain functions such as face recognition, memory, focus, attention, listening skills, and language skills. Each of these functions is processing in your brain while you share a joke, discuss the weather, delve into philosophical or political issues, or brainstorm to solve a problem.



More complex human interaction challenges your brain and increases cognitive function.

- Expose yourself to new situations, ideas and perspectives by stepping out of your comfort zone to seek out others with different interests, careers, ages, or skill sets, or those who are from different social or cultural environments. You can join groups or volunteer to expose yourself to different people and experiences.
- Pick the brains of smart people, hang out with them, study together, or discuss ideas, question popular assumptions, make new discoveries, engage in stimulating discussion, debate, or conversation.
- Share information, ask questions, or instead of promoting one side of an issue, try arguing as the devil's advocate, provoke debate.

Whenever possible, connect and socialize with different people to boost your emotional intelligence.

- Socializing generates emotions that are important for motivation and helping you find meaning – friends and family give a sense of purpose, bringing structure to your life.
- Interacting with others can lift your mood and decrease chance of depression
- Friendship encourages healthy habits.
- Friends provide an outlet for emotional expression which is good for you body as well as the brain.

Friends offer a great opportunity for attentive listening to help nurture your human interactions to build rapport, understanding, and trust.

## Stretch out Strategy #14 – Train Those Awareness Muscles by Consciously Choosing

We go about our lives experiencing our environment through our senses. Exteroceptors detect stimulation from outside of the body. Common examples are smell and taste. Interoceptors receive stimulation from the inside of the body. If you have ever had a headache or a thirst for water or been sexually aroused, it is the workings of your interoceptive sensory system.

Each of your senses has an inherent capability to receive and process stimuli. No one of your senses works in isolation or apart from the other senses. Your senses are continually interacting. What your senses experience makes you feel as though you are awake. Yet, research shows that your conscious brain is physically aware of a very small fraction of the information you could potentially capture if you took the time to train yourselves to be more aware.

Every second tens of millions of bits of data is passing through your sensory organs – eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. It is nearly impossible to imagine that you could ever be consciously aware of such a massive amount of information. Actually, most of that data is filtered out and transferred to the unconscious parts of your brain to keep you from being overwhelmed. The sensory organs and filter are working 24/7.

To get a gist of the significance, let us look at what you see through your eyes. Research shows that your eyes are exposed to more than 10 million bits of visual data every second. Out of these millions of bits your brain takes in about 40 bits and you consciously notice 16 bits. The difference between what is filtered to the conscious and unconscious parts of your brain is determined by what you consciously decide to let your eyes give attention to. The moment you consciously choose to become aware of something specific within your environment is the very moment the filtering begins to sort through anything and everything associated or connected with your desired intention. What might you be missing?

Consciously choosing means you choose differently to expose yourself to the right kinds of information to draw that 16 or more bits of data from the 10 millions bits of possibilities. You consciously zero in on what is important and give that your undivided attention. This is happening every second, which accumulates into significant amount of valuable information when you choose where to aim your attention, focus and energy.

[Learn the True Value of Undivided attention and how to Prioritize Protecting it](#)

[Learn more about Attention Management Strategies to work smarter and reclaim cognitive health](#)

### **Stretch out Strategy #15 – Be Mindful**

When you think about training your awareness muscles and choosing, you simply have to often ask, "Where is my mind?" Ask when you are standing in the shower, riding a bus, grabbing your phone for the latest Facebook update, or sipping your morning coffee?

Where is your mind when you are running on auto-pilot? Mindfulness is simply focusing completely on what you're doing, slowing down, and observing all of the physical and emotional sensations you are experiencing in that moment. Basically paying attention to where your mind is.

Mindfulness is staying in the present moment to simply focus on what you are doing, consciously choosing to stretch the sensory awareness muscles. Rather than tune out your surroundings, it means you take a few deep breaths to slow down in order to observe all the physical and emotional sensations you are experiencing in that moment. It doesn't mean judging the experience as good or bad or making comparisons. It's not about revisiting the past or anticipating the future.

You can practice mindfulness several times a day. For example:

- When you walk from one place to another sweep your eyes around your environment, pay attention to the people and objects around you, take in the details.
- While eating take time to really chew your food and concentrate on its flavours and texture; feel the morsels slide down to your stomach; discern the specific moment you become satiated.
- When you shampoo your hair, smell the fragrance of your hair products; feel the sensation of the foamy lather or massaging your scalp; notice the splay of your fingers and how rubbing your scalp shifts the skin on your forehead or cheeks. Note the muscle tension in your eyelids, listen to the water spray.

Incorporating short sessions of mindfulness throughout your day is a cognitive exercise that will strengthen and expand your attention span for the times when you really need it.

### **Stretch out Strategy #16 – Listen More Attentively and Actively**

Making an effort to focus all your energy on sounds strengthens your concentration muscles overall.

- In conversation, pay attention to the person speaking, listen for inflections, tone of voice, nuances in language. Focus on the words and the presentation. This exercise is an essential intellectual and interpersonal skill.
- When listening to music, pay closer attention to lyrics, the variety of instruments, sing along or tap out the beat. Experience different genres, seek similarities.
- Listen to nature or the sounds of your street or community.
- Listen to the sounds of appliances or the buzz of electricity.
- Listen at various times of the day or night to experience the differences.

There are several ways to practice attentive listening.  
[Learn More about Developing Listening Skills](#)



## Stretch out Strategy #17 – Be Observant

A person with strong observation skills will notice, analyze, and remember their surroundings. To become more observant take time each day to study your surroundings and do so by engaging all your senses to stretch your awareness muscles.

Strengthen your powers of observation with this exercise:

- Meticulously observe one stationary thing, pay attention to details. Then record the details.
- Study a building, landscape, co-workers desk, single object, or image.
- Give yourself one minute to scrutinize it for little details.
- Then close your eyes and remember.
- Next, with the object or scene out of your sight, describe those details.
- For realistic results, itemize every aspect in writing, or you can keep your eyes closed and record yourself describing the details.
- As you become more adept in this exercise, reduce your observation time from one minute to seconds.

Take a look at illustration on the right. We'll use this example to demonstrate an observation exercise.

Some of you may describe this image simply: a pen and black glasses on top of a coiled notepad. Some may include more detail:



- a two-toned silver ball point pen
- black rimmed reading glasses
- both sitting on a coiled notepad that has a beige cover.
- notepad is on a desk, but part of one corner hangs over a keyboard.

Closer observation might have others of you providing more details:

- The pen is silver toned metal. The tip, push button and clip are shiny. The ball point is not visible. The lower portion of the pen below the joint is embossed with rows of aligned circles, eight per row, three rows are visible. The upper portion is brushed metal. The push button is fat.
- The style of the black rimmed reading glasses indicate they probably belong to a lady. The shape of the lenses is oval, narrow upswept almond-shaped. The black rim surrounds the lenses and is plain, no adornments showing. The black arms of the glasses are folded in and the arms extend beyond the widest part of the lenses by at least half and inch.
- The glasses and pen are resting on top of a rectangular shaped notebook with twin loop wire binding on the long side and thin cardboard backing, which is light brown or beige in color. The notebook is closed and laying upside down so the cover is not visible.

- The glasses lay parallel to the binding with the left lens close to the short edge of the notebook and the top of the glasses nearer the binding and slightly less than in the middle of the notebook closer. That is closer to the binding than the opposite edge. The pen is situated at an angle to the book and the glasses so that the point of the pen and the left arm look like they are nearly touching in the middle of the notebook.
- The notebook is plain with has no visible label, marks or writing. It is situated on a light beige or cream colored desk. The desk has a keyboard shelf lower than the surface of the desk. The keyboard on the shelf is a shade of white or beige. It is not an ergonomic keyboard. A fairly large portion of the corner of the notebook is off the desk hanging over the keyboard. The corner of the notebook appears to be over the letters "k" or "u".
- The image centers on the reading glasses and pen. The image does not reveal 100% of the notebook, desk and keyboard, but enough to be recognizable.
- The eyeglasses and pen appear to offer the reflection of a light shining from the left and above the desk.
- The keyboard has fuzzy letters and symbols. Otherwise the image is clean, nothing scratched or worn or misused. There is no evident advertising or promotional significance.

### Stretch out Strategy #18 – Use your Mind’s Eye

Add a new dimension to any exercise for your brain by using the power of your imagination to conjure up a mental image that is a variation of your current experience.

Use your mind’s eye deliberately for two to five minutes every day. An opportunity presents itself every time something catches your attention. Use that image to synthesize or create a completely new image



or experience.

Say you see someone walking. Can you conjure her walking a dog? Two dogs? Could you imagine the dogs flying? Skating? Changing into cartoons? Other critters? In your mind’s eye, what happens next?

Using the observation exercise from Strategy #17, you could use your mind’s eye to conjure an image of who brought the items to this location. How old is this person. How were the items were previously used. Could the notebook belong to a reporter, detective, student, writer, analyst? Imagine the pages within and what secrets or revelations might be written inside? Imagine other uses for these items or how you might wish to use the items.

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Who knows where your mind's eye will lead you how your imagination will boost your cognitive powers!

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In our commitment to helping you achieve long-term personal development and use your organizational platform for positive impact, we celebrate the journey of lifelong learning while fostering an all-inclusive community driven environment of meaning, personal connection, and fun.

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