

# Workshops to charge memory

## Experts Help Students Organize What They Learn Through The Yr

Sruthy Susan Ullas | TNN

**Bangalore:** Ashraff (name changed), 15, can rattle off the atomic weight of the first 15 elements in the periodic table in one breath. Vaibhav, a Class 11 student, says he reads 25,000 words per minute.

Geniuses in the making? But both these kids introduce themselves as average students. The magic mantra, they say, are memory-enhancing workshops.

It's the season to charge those grey cells, and what better way than a workshop. From pills and tonics to tips and techniques, memory enhancers are the in thing. And these workshops have much on offer to help students fare well.

**TOP COPY**

One common technique is the pegging model, where subjects difficult to memorize are pegged to something else. "We train

them in the law of imagination. Students are taught to visualize. Next, they connect the visuals to themselves. It helps easy recall," says Biswaroop Roy Chowdhury, a memory trainer, Dynamic Memory, Faridabad. Biswaroop visits Karnataka often to conduct workshops.

D Krishnamurthy, a memory technologist in Hanumanthnagar, works on similar lines. "Rote memory is constant repetition. If you forget a key word, you tend to forget everything. Here, you aren't losing anything because it's systematic," he says. Predictably, January is a busy time for him. "It is the time when knowledge gathered through the year is cluttered and needs organization," he says.

There are others who promise more. Life strategist Md A A Ahmed conducts exam maximizer programmes which comes in beginners and advanced capsules. Level 1 gives tips on learning long answers in a single reading, memorizing key words in 120 seconds, and helps concentrate on boring subjects. Ahmed wants to patent a technique called flash reading, which he has developed. Here, a student can read 30,000 words in a minute. According to him, the student actually comprehends what he reads.

Midbrain Masters, a centre headquartered in Malaysia, says it can help children activate their 'midbrain'. "An activated midbrain helps improve concentration, enhance memory and speed up learning," says Rajeev Ahuja, trainer.

Experts feel sheer rote learning is promoted in such cases. "Many of these techniques look at rote or associative memory. Since our academic system is based on rote learning, and not much on analytical skills, it helps score marks. It doesn't do much to improve cognitive ability," points out Sulatha Shenoy, director, Turning Point Psychological Centre.

"There are some simple facts where there's nothing to understand; like Gandhiji's date of birth, or the boiling point of a liquid. One has to have an imaginary understanding of it," says Biswaroop.

### POINTS TO BE NOTED

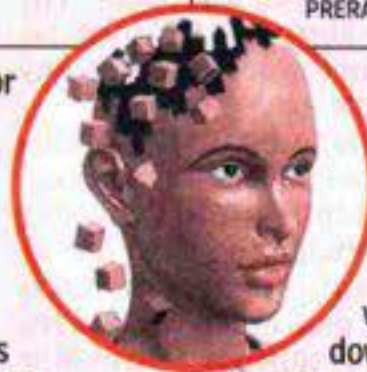


Workshops should look at emotional, social abilities, leadership skills and teamwork. Most students I get are looking to improve memory. What they really need is an interest in the subject, some motivation, and better teachers.

**Sulatha Shenoy** | DIRECTOR, TURNING POINT PSYCHOLOGICAL CENTRE

There's no quick-fix to enhance memory. The techniques cannot be universally applicable. Factors like emotional stress, motivation level and interest affect memory. Feedback and follow-up is important to see if the techniques are working.

**Meera Ravi** | PSYCHOLOGIST, PRERANA ACADEMY



Several factors lead to poor memory. Most kids multi-task while studying; some fiddle with their phones, some listen to music. Many suffer from low self-esteem and become anxious. All workshops address these problems. However, the techniques they learn don't help in the long run. Boards like CBSE have started insisting on analytical learning. When Narayana Murthy says our engineering graduates are not employable, it is not surprising. Marks are important, but there's more to life.

**Vikram Prabhu** | PSYCHIATRIST, SAGAR HOSPITAL

Such workshops stem from the idea of rote learning. If a teacher deals with a subject engagingly, kids will learn. If not, they will have to look at mechanical ways of doing it. It boils down to good teaching approaches and pedagogy.

**Maya Menon** | TEACHER FOUNDATION

I feel like I have textbooks in my head. I know what's on which page. When we have to look at tabular columns during exams, things are much easier for me because I know them by heart.

**Vaibhav** | CLASS 11 STUDENT WHO ATTENDED AHMED'S WORKSHOP

### TIMES VIEW

First it was memory pills and now it's memory boosting workshops. In a marks card-driven education system like ours, it's no surprise that students are enrolling for such workshops. Often, such businesses thrive on people's fears and a constant urge to prove themselves among peers and in social circles. Parents need to take a cautious approach here. While aiming for academic excellence is fine, they should realize there's life beyond books. Surely such sessions could address concerns like confidence levels, stress, emotional baggage and thereby help students focus better. Rote learning shouldn't be the ultimate aim.

These workshops also focus on confidence levels, stress, emotional baggage, etc. "Students often complain they don't have the right mood to study and of short attention span. We train them to overcome these," says Ahmed.