Improving your short term memory

Someone has just introduced themselves to you but a few seconds later you can’t recall their name. Why?

When a piece of information, such as someone’s name, is heard it goes into your short term memory. This part of your memory can hold a limited amount of information for several seconds to minutes.

Not being able to recall this name a few seconds later often reflects not paying close attention because you are multitasking.

One way, therefore, to improve your short term memory is to give focused attention to the information being shared. The following techniques can help you to do this:

**Recapping**
A way to overcome the limitations of short term memory and retain information for longer is to repeat or recap the information, either by saying it out loud or by mentally recapping or repeating it.

**Chunking**
The process of chunking, where you organise information into meaningful groups, can greatly increase your recall capacity. For example, in recalling a phone number, you could chunk the digit into four groups i.e. 0412 (my mobile prefix) 76, 58, 38. This method is more effective than attempting to remember a string of 10 digits.

**Linking**
Linking new information to known information in long term memory can lead to additional improvements. For example, you are just introduced to Julia and you mentally link this to a known name (e.g. Julia Gillard).

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