

A Global Program Exchange for Positive Aging



EURAG Course in Memory Training from Prague taught in Boston – July 2015



www.trenovanipameti.cz [Dana Steinova](#) founder in 1998 of the [EURAG memory training centre](#) is also the Pass It On Network's liaison for the Czech Republic. Dana has trained an estimated 20 000 memory trainers around the globe.

Dr. Jan Hively, co-founder of the Pass It On Network and member of the Life Planning Network (LPN), first met Dana Steinova in 2013 when Dana was presenting memory training at an American Society on Aging conference. Jan introduced Moira Allan to Dana and Moira did the training in Estonia in August 2014. Jan identified interested members of LPN and invited Dana to teach professionals in the field of aging to do memory training. Dana accepted and LPN sponsored a successful 5-day training, managed by LPN's program chair, Kendall Dudley, July 13-17 in Massachusetts.



LPN Memory Training students : Barbara Abramowitz, Sherry Greene, Meg Newhouse, Jan Hively, Dana Steinova, Dori Mintzer, Connie Goldman and Joan Ditzion.



Objectives of the EURAG Memory Training Centre in Prague

The Objectives of memory training for the elderly...

As one is getting older it is difficult not to notice memory lapses which are becoming more frequent. Many older persons are accepting the deterioration of their memory as an inevitable hardship, similar to the progressive decay of their body. And they become quite indulgent toward themselves, not more willing to develop too much effort to remember and they are actually giving up in advance. In addition, most of the elderly believe that a miraculous tablet with an instant effect could be the solution.

Our goal is to convince the aging population that as far as our memory is concerned we have our fate more or less in our own hands. The brain behaves in the same way as a muscle that loses its function if not being permanently in use. Anybody with a broken arm who after six weeks got rid of his plaster could doubt the necessity of a long period of intensive rehabilitation to re-gain the former strenght of his arm.

The basic explanation of theory how our memory works is a necessary precondition for better understading of our memory problems. It is always a big relief for participants to learn that we have actually not been predestined by nature itself to remember too much. The limited capacity of our short-term memory is a surprise for them. And the fact that it is very difficult for the untrained brain to develop encoding strategies as we get older sounds very discouraging to them.

Fortunately we can take advantage of mnemonics, the legacy of ancient Greeks. Mnemonics, which in themselves do not improve our memory, but do compensate its imperfection

amazingly are very effective and instant tool. With a help of mnemonics we can easily convince 90 year old that remember long lines of digits or long shopping lists can be fun. And more, they can suddenly remember high amount of information without apparent effort. In reality it means that within 20 minutes you can increase the self-esteem and self-confidence of elderly. And once you manage to convince them that they can still remember a lot and that in reality, they have been only underestimating their own skills for a long time, they start to approach any new information with positive expectation that they will remember and it does naturally affect the result. Memory training classes have much broader impact. Once you increase the self-confidence of the participants they are able to deal with difficulties of daily life with higher efficiency. So in reality such classes have a direct impact on the quality of life.

The more people master the art of memory training the more independent our aging population will be. So the intention is not only to provide memory training classes for the elderly but mainly to train instructors who could teach such classes and special effort should be developed in the area of institutional care.

The greenhouse like environment where the residents are being provided with full care results in a lack of interest in anything else but what will be served for lunch or dinner. Memory training sessions are a source of stimulation and form of socializing for the residents. Active and self-confident residents of institutions living in an environment rich with physical, mental and social stimulation will be less susceptible to suffer from stress and depression. And because depression leads to deterioration of cognitive functions to such extent that they can be easily mistaken for symptoms of AD, all facts speak in favor of endeavour to introduce memory training sessions into all institutions. The recent scientific research proved also unexpected impact of physical and cognitive training on persons in early stage of AD which slows down dramatically the course of physical and mental deterioration.

EURAG/European Federation of Older Persons-36 member states/ memory training center has the mission to share the long-term professional experience of European memory trainers with other countries for the benefit of their elderly with intention to promote cognitive and physical training as an indispensable and vital part of daily life of aging population.

The Principal goals and specific objectives of memory training in the Czech Republic

1. Our goal is to enable Seniors to apply well established techniques and strategies for remembering in their daily lives in order to strengthen their independence.
2. Our speciality is the "Therapy of pleasant shock" whereby the participants verify through concentration tests and the use of complex strategies (ex association and visualisation) that their memory is still functional. As a result trained Seniors approach any new information in the positive expectation that they will remember it and this does affect the result.
3. This approach leads to an instant increase in self confidence and self esteem of the Seniors participating in our classes which reflects generally in an improvement in their quality of life because they are able to deal with the problems of daily life more efficiently.
4. We use an individual approach and adjust training to the abilities of our clients in order to ensure that they succeed and experience a feeling of victory through their efforts.
5. The personal responsibility of the trainer for the success of the client is the alpha and omega of our training task. It is not the fault of the client if he does not succeed but of the trainer who has not been able to adjust the task to the client's abilities and failed to fulfill his mission.
6. We focus on changing the Seniors' attitude toward their own memory problems so that they cease to perceive them as an inevitable and negative part of the ageing process and realise that their fate is largely in their own hands.
7. The content of each session is prepared with the intention that the Seniors will obtain a long term benefit from attending.
8. Memory training is a combination of cognitive training and relaxing psychomotoric exercises. It serves as a platform for social contact with similarly motivated Seniors.
9. Memory training is an effective tool in promoting self sufficiency and the prolonged independence of our ageing population which is resulting from our greater life expectancy and changes in demography. It is the cheapest solution from the economical point of view and the most dignified way of ageing for individuals.