

“Accepting where I’m at”- A qualitative study of the mechanisms, benefits, and impact of a behavioural memory intervention for community-dwelling older adults



April Au¹, Susan Vandermorris², Sylvia Davidson^{1,2}, Joanna Sue^{2,3}, Shafagh Fallah¹ & Angela Troyer^{1,2}
 University of Toronto¹, Baycrest Health Sciences², Queen’s University³



Introduction

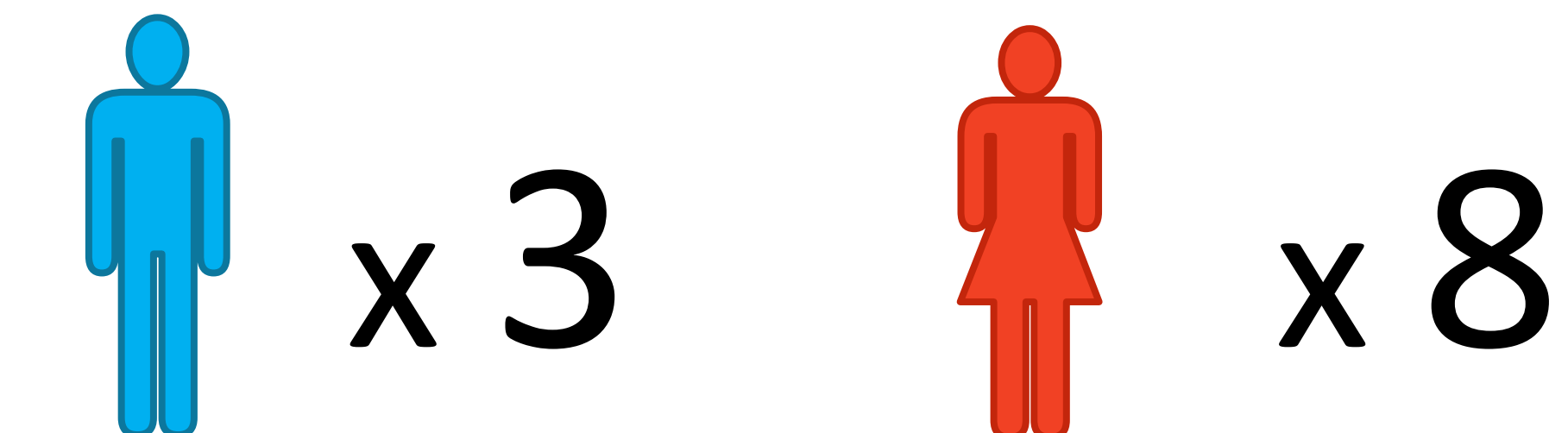
- Behavioural memory intervention programs for older adults have shown many benefits, such as: knowledge gain, improved emotional health and daily functioning, and there is some evidence for objective memory improvement^{1,2}
- Such programs may be beneficial for older adults experiencing perceived memory decline within the normative age range
- **Study objective:** understand the therapeutic mechanisms, benefits and impact of an evidence-based memory and lifestyle behavioural intervention: the **Memory and Aging Program™**

Intervention

- Program delivered by a psychologist or an upper-level trainee
- 10h of intervention in groups of 10-20 healthy, older adults
- **Intervention goals:** 1) educate participants on normal age-related changes; 2) foster healthy lifestyle choices and application of memory strategies
- Strategies taught included implementation intentions, habits, spaced retrieval, semantic elaboration, and use of external memory aids
- Past studies have shown significant increase in subjective ratings of memory, increase in knowledge, and confidence post-intervention^{3,4}

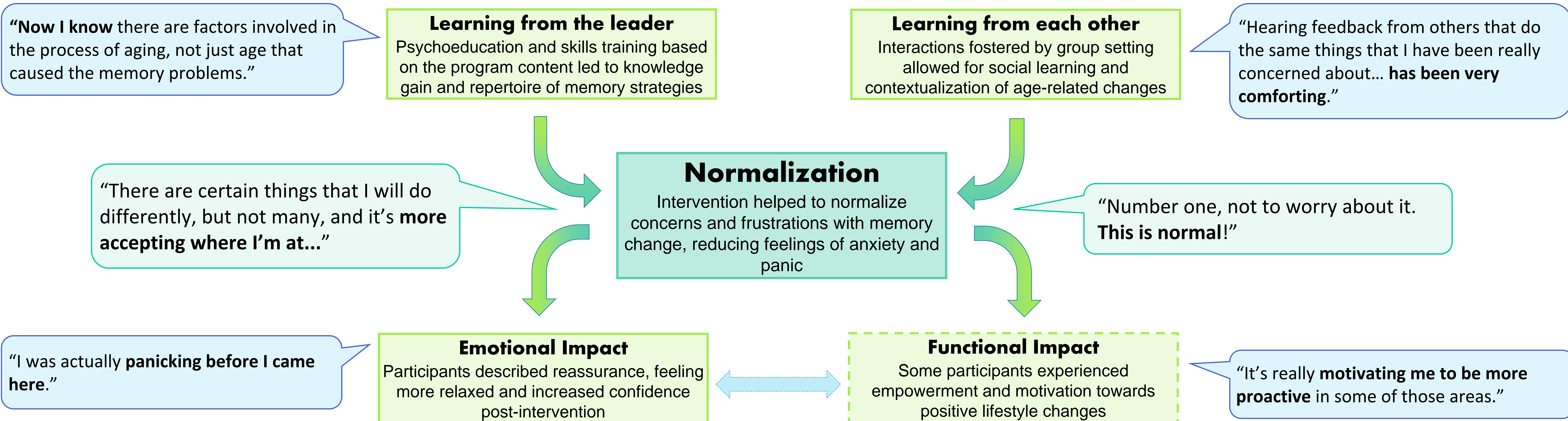
Method

- Conducted 11 semi-structured interviews with individuals post-intervention
- Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes each
- Constant comparison was used to extract themes from the coded interviews



Participant Age	
Mean	75
Min	63
Max	88

Results



Discussion

- Qualitative analyses of participants’ perspectives yielded insight into the dual mechanism of the intervention: learning from the group and learning from the leader
- Participants gained an understanding of their experiences as normal and received information and strategies to optimize daily functioning following the program
- Normalization of age-related cognitive changes was experienced by all participants post-intervention, and identified as a major therapeutic benefit of the program
- Some participants described a relationship between emotional and functional impact; for instance, feeling more confident decreased feelings of stress and facilitated memory functioning
- A theme of aging was also described by participants, but future research will be needed to elucidate how the perspective of aging in oneself and others affects self-efficacy in older adults
- Sustainability of benefits and impact of the intervention will also have to be further evaluated due to the challenging nature of implementing long-term changes in lifestyle and behaviours

References

- ¹ Thompson G, Foth D. Cognitive-training programs for older adults: What are they and can they enhance mental fitness? *Educational Gerontology*. 2005;31(8): 603–626.
- ² Floyd M, Scogin F. Effects of memory training on the subjective memory functioning and mental health of older adults: A meta-analysis. *Psychology and Aging*. 1997;12(1):150-161.
- ³ Troyer AK. Improving memory knowledge, satisfaction, and functioning via an education and intervention program for older adults. *Aging, Neuropsychology, and Cognition*. 2001;8(4):256-68
- ⁴ Wiegand MA, Troyer AK, Gojmerac C, Murphy KJ. Facilitating change in health-related behaviors and intentions: a randomized controlled trial of a multidimensional memory program for older adults. *Aging & Mental Health*. 2013;17(7):806-15.