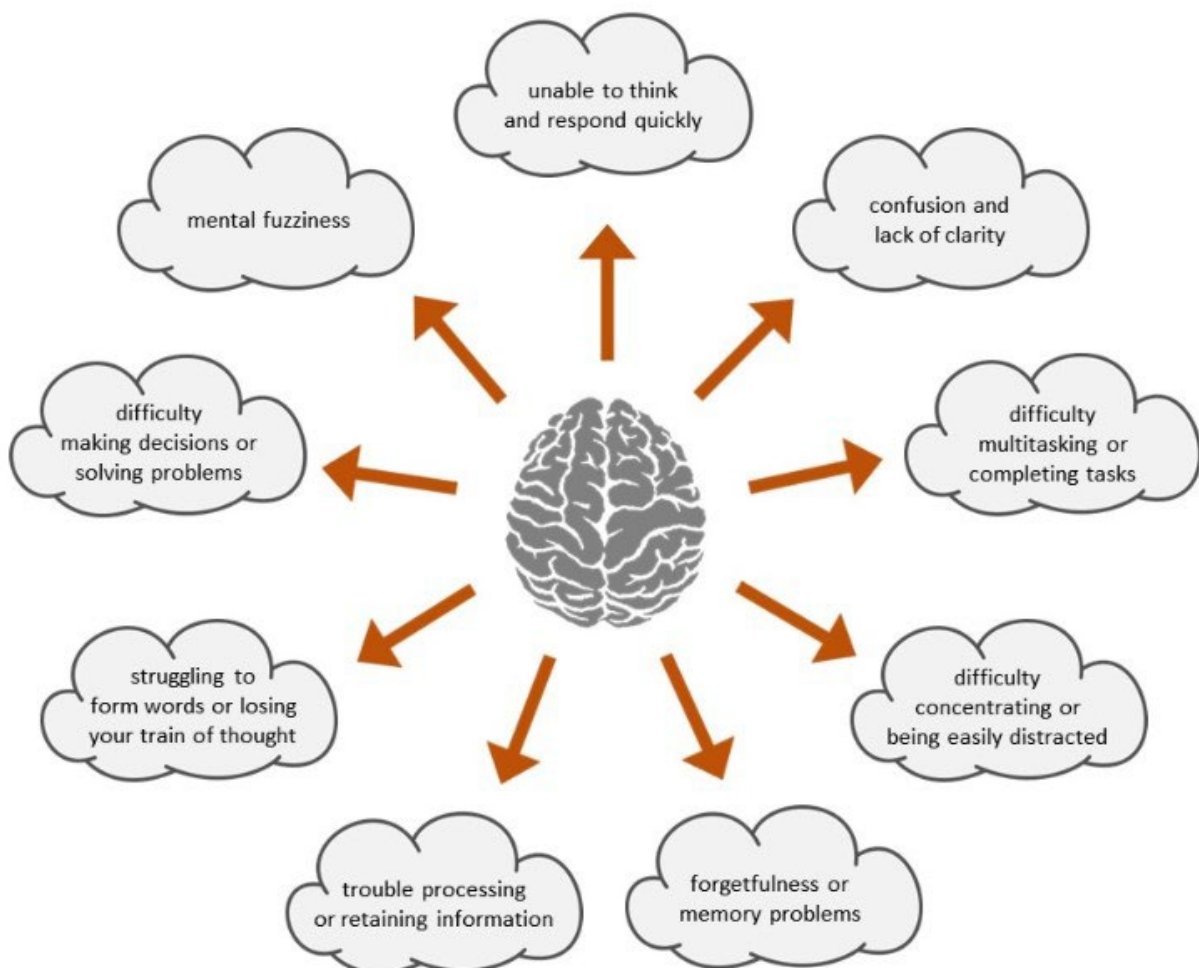




# Managing problems with attention memory, and thinking clearly

People with Long COVID commonly experience a range of difficulties with their thinking skills (referred to as “cognition”). These difficulties can include problems with memory, attention, information processing, planning, and organization. This is also referred to as “brain fog”. Brain fog is often made worse by fatigue, meaning the more tired you are, the more you notice increased difficulty with your thinking skills.

## WHAT CAN BRAIN FOG LOOK AND FEEL LIKE?



It's important for you and your family to recognize if you're experiencing these difficulties, as they can have an impact on your relationships, daily activities and your return to work or education. If you experience any of these difficulties, the strategies below may help.

- **Minimize distractions:** try to work in a quiet environment with no background distractions. You can use ear plugs if needed. If you're distracted when reading text, block off parts of the text using paper, or use your finger as a marker.
- **Complete activities when less fatigued:** when completing a task that demands your thinking skills, plan this for a time when you're less tired. For example, if you tire as the day goes on, do the task in the morning.
- **Take frequent breaks:** if the problem is made worse by fatigue, work for shorter periods of time and take breaks.
- **Set yourself reasonable targets or goals:** having something definite to work towards will help you stay motivated. Make sure you set realistic goals that are achievable – for example, reading just five pages of a book every day.
- **Have a schedule:** try to set up your daily/weekly schedule of tasks. It may help to plan activities ahead of time. Keeping a record, or breaking things down into manageable parts, can also help.
- **Use incentives:** when you achieve a target or goal, reward yourself – try something very simple, such as having a cup of tea or coffee, watching TV, or going for a walk.
- **One thing at a time:** don't rush or try to take in too much information at once, as this can lead to mistakes.
- **Aids:** using lists, notes, diaries, and calendars can help support your memory and routine.
- **Brain exercises:** you could try new hobbies, puzzles, word and number games, memory exercises or reading to help with your thinking. Start with brain exercises that challenge you but are achievable and increase the difficulty as you are able.
- **Physical exercise:** while this may be difficult if you are experiencing weakness, breathlessness, or fatigue, try gradually introducing gentle exercise into your daily routine. Check with your doctor before taking up a new exercise regime.
- **Nutrition:** eating a healthy and balanced diet that includes olive oil, fruits, vegetables, legumes (such as lentil and beans), nuts, and whole grains has been proven to improve thinking, memory, and brain health.