

UNDERSTANDING

METACOGNITION

COGNITIVE

LOAD



# ***Cognitive Load is:***

**The amount of information  
your working memory can hold  
at one time.**

**Basically, all the things your  
brain is trying to process at any  
given time.**

# Quick! What is on your Cognitive Load? Make a Mental List

Your humanities teacher assigns an insane amount of work. You know you have this paper due, but like, you hated the book and stopped reading 3/4 of the way through and now you have no idea what you are going to write about

*Is your friend mad at you?*

Are you thinking about an embarrassing moment from earlier?

You did a really awesome job on that project and got tons of really good feedback

*Wait, when is that project due?*

ARE YOU GOING INTO A SPACE LATER TODAY THAT FEELS UNSAFE? IS SOMEONE GOING TO JUDGE YOU OR MAKE BIAS ASSUMPTIONS?

Are you too hot or too cold?

*Are you hungry?*

REMEMBER THAT FIGHT YOU GOT INTO EARLIER TODAY? THAT PERSON IS STILL MAD AT YOU. THAT INTERACTION CHANGED THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP FOREVER.

*Your family member is sick and you are trying not to think about it.*

**What's the weird noise in the background?**

ARE YOU ATTRACTIVE? DO OTHER PEOPLE THINK ABOUT HOW YOU LOOK?

@namethemtotamethem

# ***See What Happened There?*** **I messed with your Cognitive Load**

I gave your brain a task, a pretty simple one- Make a mental list of the things on your Cognitive Load.

Then I introduced a ton of new, disorganized, hard to read, irrelevant information.

What did your brain do? Did you keep working on the mental list, or did you get distracted by the new task in front of you? How did you feel? Annoyed? Confused? Frustrated?

# ***Your brain can only process so much***

If you're carrying a heavy load, or if one thing is taking up a lot of space in your brain, you have less resources to spread around.

So, if you have something really stressful going on, it can be really hard to focus on anything else or control your emotions.

Or, if you are really hungry, it can be hard to not snap at someone, focus, or make decisions.

# ***Thinking about your Cognitive Load is an important part of Metacognition***

Taking a moment and try and list all of the things you are currently processing helps you get in the habit of thinking about your thinking.

Acknowledging your cognitive load can help you feel more in control. For real, stop and make a list when you're feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or distracted.

Understanding Cognitive Load can help you re-frame challenging moments. You're not a failure, or dumb, or weak. You have a lot going on and you are trying to figure it out.

# ***Thinking about Cognitive Load is also an important part of thinking about others***

We are all processing a lot all the time. We don't know what other folks are carrying.

When you are frustrated with someone, try and take a pause and think about all the possible things they could be carrying. Or what you may be carrying that is making you more easily frustrated.

Society does not automatically grant all folks emotional safety, especially if they come from marginalized groups. Identity has a huge impact on Cognitive Load.

**You matter.**

**Your emotions matter.**

**Other folks' emotions  
matter.**

**Start thinking about your  
Cognitive Load.**