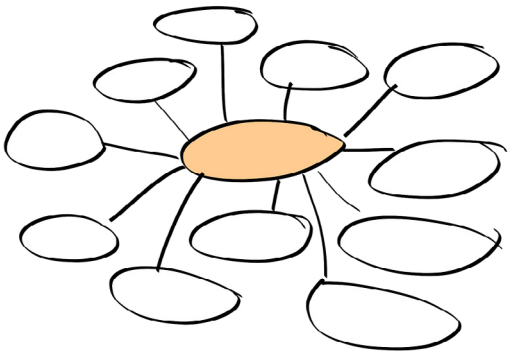
Be AGILE Strategy: Mind Mapping

What is a mind map?

A mind map is a visual representation of a concept or process. Mind mapping allows the learner to brainstorm without worrying about the structure or final picture.



What are the benefits?

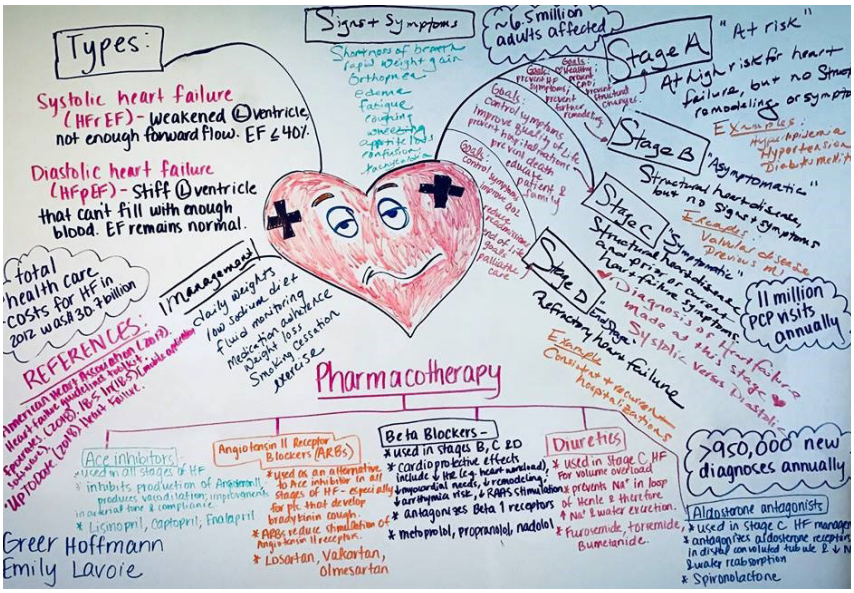
Mind mapping is a "self-testing" approach to determine how much can be remembered without looking at the notes, textbook, or other materials. It creates an opportunity for the learner to make connections between facts, ideas, or concepts. It also allows the learner to determine the gaps in memory or understanding, which in turn helps to target additional study efforts. In the writing process, mind mapping is an effective way to get past the "blank page", outlining the key points and arguments to be made in the paper.

How do I use this approach?

- **Start with a blank paper, screen, or white board.**
- **Put aside any concern about how the mind map will look to others. This is for your own learning, and only needs to make sense to YOU. It is a brainstorm, not a polished product.**
- **In the center, write down a central concept, fact, or idea with a circle around it.**
- **Ask yourself, "What is the first thing that comes to mind when I see this concept?" Write it down in another circle, and draw the connection.**
- **Continue to add ideas, concepts, and pieces of information as they come to mind. It may be, for example, that one idea generates several "sub-ideas" (smaller but related), connected to the same main idea by lines, and even to each other by other lines.**
- **Lines can show relationship between ideas by using directional arrows, thickness, or solid versus dotted.**
- **Use colors, symbols, and images in your mind map that trigger memory and understanding for you.**
- **After your initial effort, save the mind map by taking a picture of it or saving it as a file if done electronically.**
- **Refer back to your map later in the week for review and to add more thoughts, ideas, or connections that come to mind.**

Are there any related technologies?

There are several mind mapping platforms available on the web, as well as several apps for a smart phone. As a USM student, you can access the "gold" version of MindMup via your maine.edu Google account. There is also a mind mapping program called Inspiration 9 on every student computer on all three campuses. However, sometimes the best "technology" is a piece of paper or a white board, since the effort can go towards the brainstorming process instead of mastering the technology. Above (right) is a picture of a mind map created by two USM nursing students during a study session at The Learning Commons.



Where can I get more information?

A thorough overview of mind mapping, including several examples of maps and applications of mind mapping, can be found at www.mindmapping.com.

The Learning Commons is another great resource for mindmapping, including working with a trained peer tutor or watching the mind mapping series on their YouTube channel. For details, visit The Learning Commons website, usm.maine.edu/learningcommons.

What does it mean to be AGILE?

We want to help you, as a USM student, avoid common learning challenges, and instead increase your memory, understanding, and academic performance. These strategies will involve self-testing, active practice, making connections between ideas, all of which will maximize your academic time both inside and outside of the classroom.

The mantra we want you to remember is: "Be an AGILE learner" (Academic Gains through Improved Learning Effectiveness).

At first, some of these approaches may seem like "more work", but that's normal! Any time we try a new behavior with any area of our life, it takes more thought and effort. By practicing these strategies, you will see improvements very quickly, and soon these habits will become your "new normal".

For more detailed information on this active learning strategy, visit: usm.maine.edu/AGILE.