

Chapter 1: Memory

Welcome to the first chapter of this book. Just like most first chapters go, this one will be dedicated towards making you familiar with the concept and variations of the concept of memory. This chapter will lay the foundation of everything that you are going to encounter in the next some chapters.

Let us start with what memory really is. You use the word ‘memory’ in our daily lives, just like you use the word ‘please’, ‘excuse’, and ‘pollution’. It is as common a word as any other. Have you ever paused for a while and thought about what it really is? Let us get you familiar with the real dynamics of memory functioning.

In purely psychological terms, memory is a place. It is a place where information, of any kind, is stored, processed and retrieved whenever required. Imagine a large palace adorned with chandeliers and containing a lot of rooms, smaller than the bigger hall that stands in the middle.

Psychologists refer to this place as the human Memory Palace. A Memory Palace is nothing but a hypothetical place which has been constructed to give you an idea of how memory functions. The small rooms that the palace contains are mere divisions of your memory according to classifications unconsciously made by you. One room could be about your office meeting timings, submission of important documents and salary details. This room is specifically meant for one-purpose only - office related memories.

Another room could be filled with memories associated with your romantic interest. Sarah and her face pictures, the gown that you gifted her and the romantic dinner dates you have been on together-this room will be overflowing with memories related to your love life. There will be another room that will be filled with embarrassing stories from your past.

Remember that one time in high school when you bent down to pick your pen and your pants ripped? Or the date you went to, with pimples adorning your face like flies. This room is seldom opened and stays usually locked. There could be another room filled with your life’s fantasies. We all have fantasies we do not admit having. You could have a particular fetish when it comes to sex and you are too scared to admit it to your partner. You store such fetishes in a single room inside your memory palace. Hence, a memory palace is a collection of

everything that you have experienced and you wish to achieve.

Now that you have been made familiar with a general understanding of how your memory functions, let us move ahead and have a good grasp about the real and most accurate idea of memory-the biological understanding of it.

Your memory can be classified into two divisions-Primary and Secondary.

Primary Memory

Primary memory is nothing but a collection of everything and anything that has a short life span. Imagine driving through the traffic to your office and reading a billboard on the way. It features Pamela Anderson in her famous beachwear. You will look at it for a minute, read the accompanying product that she is trying to sell, hear the honks from behind and move ahead towards the direction of your workplace. By the time you are back home in the evening, having a meal, you would not remember what exact product Pam was trying to sell, or what colored beach wear did she wear while doing it. This is your short-term memory.

A person's short-term memory contains information related to things that have just happened. Such things are not important to the person's life, not now at least. Short-term memory helps you move through the day though. The bits of information it provides you with ultimately forms links to join together and lead to the forging of the large chain that pulls you through your day. Imagine if you started forgetting the tiniest of details about what you just did. Remember the example given at the start of this book about the fridge? That is one of the best instances of the disadvantages of short-term memory loss.

Secondary Memory

Long-term memory on the other hand, is obviously wider than short-term memory. Look at how I used the word wider and not better. We will come to this later. Long-term memory is the collection of all those memories that you have stored in order to retrieve later in life. Such memories are not easily washed away by stress or daily life shenanigans. There are certain things in life that you cannot just simply forget about. These things could range from the first time you had sex to your social security number.

Studies have shown that the long-term memory of a person is naturally stronger than his short-term memory. The contents of your long-term memory are close and dear to you. The contents could also be simply important without having any sort of emotional worth to you or your life. The more the contents of a long-term memory of a person, the healthier his memory in general is. In fact, one of the surest ways to gauge how strong someone's memory is to have a look at how big one's long term memory department is.

There is another form of memory that you need to understand before advancing further in this book. Scientifically called Sensory memory, this type of memory is even shorter than your short-term memory. It is the shortest possible form of memory. You must be familiar with the five basic human senses. Smell, sight, taste, touch and listening! The basic five human sensations contribute to ninety percent of whatever experiences you go through in your life. Everything else is mostly psychological in nature. Sensory memory stores the immediate information that you gather by the employment of these five senses. Imagine walking down the street to buy groceries. Due to the locality being a suburb there would be drug peddler trying to sell you cheap drugs. One such rag picker comes up to you and tries to sell something wrapped in white polythene. Although you are not someone who is into such illegal indulgences, you have a look at the teenager rag picker and scrounge your nose to show disappointment and disinterest in his offer. You walk off your way after having made a signal that you do not want the drugs. However, after reaching the grocery, you still retain the details about the person's appearance, with regards to his clothes, appeal and the contents of his hands.

This is your sensory memory helping you recall whatever you experienced only minutes ago. Sensory memory can work in seconds as well. It helps you recall the minutest possible things in your day-to-day lives.