



*Changing lives...
...one mind at a time!*

Don't Remember This!

"Abandon all hope of creating a better past. Instead, focus on creating a better "now", and an even more wondrous future."

Gregg Braden, Author

"Your memory is a monster; you forget - it doesn't. It simply files things away. It keeps things for you, or hides things from you - and summons them to your recall with a will of its own. You think you have a memory; but it has you!"

John Irving

So, do YOU have a memory?

Or does your memory have YOU?

The title of this article is "Don't remember this article"! Sure! The problem is...we do remember. We remember everything! And, by instructing you in the title to not remember this article, it's very possible that it may become the article that you remember the most. A couple of experiments will serve our purpose here:

1. I want you **not** to think about a large pink elephant, carrying a parasol, and walking on a tightrope. You thought of it, didn't you?
2. Next, I want you to take a small object, perhaps a salt shaker (but any object will do), and set it on the very edge of the table in front of you. Now, lean as closely as possible to that edge of the table, just in front of the salt shaker. How far would you say you are from the object? An inch or two? Perhaps three inches? Now, take the salt shaker in your hand, and without letting go of it, push the salt shaker across the table and hold it just as far away from your chest as possible. Now, how far away from it are you? If

you've said that you are now twenty inches or so away, or the length of your arm away from it, then you've not realized that you are actually touching it...with your hand. You are closer to it than before.

Memory is a lot like that. It's ironic, but the things we try not to remember, often become the things that we remember the most. And, by trying to push memories away, we frequently bring ourselves closer to them. Painful memories often seem to crowd out the good ones. Real or imagined hurts, embarrassments, mistakes, unintentional remarks, etc, are often the ones we try to push away the most. However, by the very act of pushing them away, we may be indelibly marking them for current memory.

Another experiment: Have you ever driven down the freeway, perhaps idly wondering about some event transpiring in your life? Maybe you were rehearsing a presentation that would be given once you arrived at your destination. Perhaps you were simply listening to the radio; lost in thoughts brought on by a favorite song. Suddenly, you realize that ten or fifteen minutes have passed, and you don't remember anything about the ten or fifteen minutes of 60-mile per hour freeway scenery you've just passed. Maybe you even missed your freeway exit. Were you asleep? Did you fail to see the cars and trucks around you? Of course not. You may not remember any of it, but your eyes and ears were in constant communication with your brain. Your brain recorded everything...every movement of cars and trucks on the road with you...every passing bit of scenery. At the slightest hint of danger, your brain would have come to full alert and warned of danger. But, "remember" it? Not likely.

The same is true of our everyday events. If I ask you to relate every moment of your day yesterday, it might be rather sketchy. You would perhaps remember driving to work, a meeting you were in, lunch, a project that had to be completed, and

the event, but because the event no longer has control over us.

I heard the story once of a man (we'll call him "Bob") in his mid 40's or so, who was planning to return to his home town for the 20th anniversary of his High School graduation. The importance of the event grew in intensity as the trip drew closer, and the Bob's agitation grew more palpable with each passing day. It turned out that there had been a confrontation of some kind during that particular school year between Bob and another young man in his class. It was one of those taunting, name-calling, embarrassing, confrontations between two young testosterone-filled young men that just happened to occur in front of most of the student body, including many of the girls in his class, who giggled and twittered at the exchange. Bob, who had been ridiculed in front of his peers, and especially in front of girls, had never forgotten the embarrassment of that day. Now, as an adult, he felt that it was time to go back and "set the record straight", so to speak, and to confront this person whose memory had tormented him so much over the years. The day of the reunion arrived, Bob arrived at the appointed time and location of the reunion. Upon entering the room, he immediately recognized the person who had confronted Bob on the school grounds so many years earlier. Bob gathered up his courage and walked directly up to the other person, himself a full-grown man now also. Placing his hands on his hips, Bob looked the other man right in the eye and said, "My name is "Bob Smith", and I want to ask you a question about something that happened in our senior class year." Perplexed, the other man smiled and agreed. For the next minute or so, "Bob" related, in some heated words, how he felt about all the abuse that was heaped on him that day. When "Bob" was finished, the other man smiled sympathetically and said, "I'm sorry for your feelings, Bob, but I can honestly say that I don't remember you."

Two people...same event...two different memories...totally different memory attachments!

So how do we work on those painful memories? Let's try just four words: Confront, Analyze, Critique, Re-record! Since it's probably fruitless to try and simply forget a painful memory, let's begin to use some of the tools we've learned up to this

point. Just like the dread that is often felt before a big test, a job interview, or a contentious client meeting, there can be just as much dread in remembering a past event. When it does happen to pop into our minds, it often carries an electric-like charge that literally jolts us away from what we are concentrating on. That "jolt" of anger, hurt, or embarrassment feels just as real as it did on the day we experienced it, and the physical body reacts in exactly the same way it did at the time, triggering our fight-flight responses. As painful as it may be, if we're going to get through this next section together, then we're going to have to CONFRONT the memory and not let it linger and fester as Bob did, perhaps ruining many years of our lives.

Step 1 - CONFRONT: Let's just get that old memory right up here close, in the light, where we can look at it. Let's turn it and get a view of it from all angles. Let's get the place right. Make sure we've got the names of the players involved. If you want to recall the time of day, the temperature, or the room you were standing in, so much the better. Rather than ignoring our fears, we're going to face them straight on, just as Bob did at the reunion. For your emotional well being, I hope it hasn't been twenty years since the event. However, the level of relief I think you are going to experience in the next few paragraphs will be inversely related to the length of time since the event occurred. That is, the longer the time, the greater the relief.

Step 2. - ANALYZE: What happened exactly? What was said? What feelings did you get from that? What are your feelings trying to tell you? Did you have a confrontation like Bob's? Do you find that you get embarrassed because you don't like to be wrong? Were you angry because you felt powerless? Or, did you feel like you were getting out of control? Maybe you feel like you should have better verbal skills to defend yourself? Maybe you were afraid of getting physically hurt? Did you feel diminished in front of people you respect, admire, or even love? Did you feel unspoken pressure to do something that you know you shouldn't do? Or, perhaps you felt pressure to be something that you aspire to be, but which you know that you aren't?

There's always more than just the feelings we get in these situations. The feelings are gut level and real,

and they are trying to tell us something about ourselves, and the view we have of ourselves. They are really telling us something about our own self-esteem, and it's important to analyze and try to understand why the feelings come up. The other kid didn't make Bob angry back in High School. Bob got angry, because Bob has an opinion about himself. The other kid merely pushed the button, either on purpose or accidentally, that brought Bob's feeling to the surface. What are you feeling about the memory you have brought up? What is that memory trying to tell you about yourself?

Step 3 - CRITIQUE: Here's where we use a tool from the second article in this series. Does our think stink? Is our opinion of ourselves real? There was a television commercial back in the early 1970s for a product from Memorex Corporation. In this day of Cds and iPods, many of you reading this may not even know what recording tape is. The commercial was for cassette and reel-to-reel recording tape, and the slogan was, "Is it real? Or, is it Memorex?" The premise was that Memorex tape had such high quality recording abilities, that the ear simply could not tell the difference between a live performance and one that had been recorded on Memorex tape. The brain is far better than Memorex. It can't tell the difference between the anger you felt at a situation that took place years in the past and the anger you feel about the event when you remember it today. It can't tell the difference between the feeling you get when someone questions your intelligence and the same feeling that is generated when you question your own intelligence. The source may be different, but the feeling (and the damage) is identical. Can you tell the difference between a memory that was recorded in your own brain about who you are and the truth of who you are? What is the truth about you? What is that worth that you actually are? Is the emotional baggage of this memory really important. More significantly, is the self image that you see in this memory really the YOU that you know? Aren't those the attachments that belong with this memory, instead of the false ones? Isn't this a way to begin minimizing the terror that these scary thoughts and memories have afflicted on you? Isn't it time that you stopped being your own worst enemy? The damage that a thoughtless person does to us from the outside, pales when compared to the

damage we do to our own selves from inside our minds.

Step 4 - RE-RECORD: This last step is the hardest. Remember, your brain is not like a TIVO, a DVR, or a computer. You can't simply erase and re-record over a show or a file that you no longer want. Your memories are with you for a very long time. However, you can record a new version of your painful memory and make sure that when the old memory emerges from the mists, that the new version is there, ready to go, in living color, instead of the old black and white of yesteryear. This is the new you! These are the new recordings about you. These recordings are the more truthful versions of who you are. You are the only thinker in your mind, and you get to decide which are the memories you will entertain as truthful, consciously rejecting the "untruthful" and unimportant versions. Just remember that you will have to practice this step. Many of your memories have had control of your mind for a very long time. They will make every attempt to reassert themselves. So, just be on guard with positive affirmations about yourself, and take control of your memory.

One more point here about editing old memories, and then we'll move on, and that is the need and indeed the rightfulness of re-editing your own story. If you don't care for your memory - care for yourself - then no one else will. They really can't, because they are not inside of you, not living up inside of your head where all of this takes place. Worse still, if you don't take care of your own self - your own memory - then someone else may try to create a memory for you. In some cases, they already have edited your story for you, and in your misery, you've accepted their story of who you are as your own. So, take charge; edit your own story; be your own author; filter out the erroneous and stressful stimuli; protect your own story. By deciding to be your own author of your own life story, you will find that you begin to gain back your won emotional health.

What About New Memories?

We've given you some tools to take care of old memories; but what about the new ones that will come along tomorrow? The steps will be the same,

with the exception of the last one. Instead of “re-recording”, we will be recording for the first time. When something painful or hurtful starts to develop right before your eyes, try to confront it...not in an aggressive way, but by stepping back emotionally, detaching yourself from the moment, and really trying to objectively look at the situation, almost as a non-participant. I know that’s a difficult recipe. However, if you can emotionally detach from the event, even for a moment, you are going to have a much better chance of recording a successful outcome than if you let the emotions of anger, rage, embarrassment, or hurt get in control. The outcome will certainly be far superior than if you let your emotions drive you to run away from the event or start slinging verbal defenses without thinking. Secondly, try to analyze in real time what is going on inside of you. Is the temperature of your embarrassment rising? Why? Are you growing angry? Can you see what is causing that? Analysis, even of a single point, may allow us to begin addressing and defusing the issue at hand. (“I’m angry, and my anger is caused by this person’s use of a racial slur. And, I’m angry because I’m embarrassed about my own background”) With that kind of information, emotions can possibly be held in check long enough to confront the issue logically instead of having a pure emotional response.

Let’s critique the situation and make sure that we are telling ourselves the truth about the moment. “No, I am not what this other person says I am. I am worthy of respect. I am a child of God.” I am....well, I’ll let you fill in the rest of the blanks. You know the truth about you, and it is critical that you attach these truths to the event that is unfolding. Even if your decision is to simply turn and physically walk away from the situation, you will do it knowing the truth about you. Lastly, let’s record this event ourselves, and refuse to let anyone else record it for us. Let’s attach the best possible truth to this memory. But, let’s make sure we are attaching the truth, and, let’s refuse to attach false bravado, embellishment, war whoops, victory chants, or any prideful sort of claims about the situation. Those will turn out to be just as false and hurtful to us later on. Simply record that you handled the situation the very best that you could, as a worthy person, and begin to let that memory go to the same place where the memory about the lunch you had on a Thursday,

December 8th, three years ago. You did have lunch that day, didn’t you? You don’t remember? Oh....good for you!

Some last thoughts:

You’re not going to be perfect at this the first time you try it. If you are, then you are obviously progressing at a rate that surprises and probably pleases you greatly. If you are not progressing that fast, or if you find yourself slipping backwards, just keep trying. Keep these points in mind as you go forward with your new MRT (memory recording techniques):

1. You probably will never be perfect at this. Your memories are highly subjective. You are the one in the moment, and some moments will be more painful and emotional than others. As a result, your memories will never be flawless or absolutely correct. Don’t expect them to be, and don’t beat yourself up when you discover that something got recorded incorrectly. Just take that memory back through the steps from above, and re-record it.

2. However, you can begin to make sure that your memories are sound by striving to understand, decide, and practice: Understand what pattern or learning we are perceiving from our memories and the way we interpret (and therefore memorize) current events. Do we have regret that comes up often with our memories of past events? What is that trying to tell us about ourselves? More importantly, what does it tell us about how we should spend the next 24 hours of our lives? The next 10 minutes? Do we become easily angered in a new situation? What is that trying to tell us about our self esteem today? **DECIDE**: By understanding our interpretations and lessons from our memories, we can decide how those old memories and new ones should be refined until they work for us and cease haunting us. **PRACTICE**: Once we have re-recorded an old memory, or recorded a new one, we can practice recalling it in its new, truthful, and uncorrupted form until it works automatically and becomes the new, and only memory we have of the event.

All of this may be easy for you, or it may be difficult. But, hopefully, you now realize that it’s important.



Persevere and train yourself by being as objective as possible on this road to re-educating yourself. Good luck, and good practicing, with

your new memory about YOU!

What's next?

What I hope you have gleaned from this article is that you have a story. It's your own story. You must be the author of it, and it must be protected not only from the mangling that stress and scary situations can inflict on it, but from the external forces that will try to impose a different story on you, whether that "story interpretation" is coming from society, your employer, your best friend, or even from those you love the most. If you realize that you have to be the author and teller of your own story, the next logical leap is to realize that anyone you come in contact with, but most especially those who are close in your life - spouse, children, even your parents - have their own story also. The importance of letting them be the authors of their story and of interacting with them at deep emotional levels will be where we spend a little bit of time next. The happiness that you are probably beginning to feel in yourself by this point can be expanded many times over by simply recognizing that the ones you love and care for, and who love and care for you, want to be understood and cherished just as much as you do. By protecting your own story, you have learned that they, as individual human beings, with their own God-given lives, and with their own separate set of fears, concerns, and memories, need to protect and be the authors of their own stories also. There is much that you can do to help them in that quest by being emotionally healthy yourself. By learning to be the only thinker in your brain, you have learned that others have to be allowed to think for themselves as well.