

When you come home from a vacation, a night out, a long day, maybe even just a trip to the store, can you remember it? Probably. Maybe it takes you a few seconds to remember it but it eventually comes back to you. I know this because that's how life used to be for me too but we can get into that later. How about this; does a certain smell ever hit you and memories you didn't even know you had race into your mind?

This paper addresses memory, pretty broad subject right? Okay, well what makes memories important or meaningful? Is it the memory itself? Who was involved? Was it good or bad? The list goes on. Memories are just snippets of our own individual histories. When I think about memory, I often think about a journey through my past where I can remember some of the best moments of my life. I think I will keep these memories with me forever with the ability to think of them on the spot and retell them to whoever is interested, but this simply isn't true; I find myself being unable to remember moments as recent as a few hours prior, but why is that? Memories and moments race back to me when I smell my mom's perfume, the air freshener in my car, the taste of a certain candy or gum so why can't I remember what myself or someone said or did two hours ago? When I had a brain injury a number of years ago, the connection between my scent receptors and my brain were cut off but how does this affect memory? Our brain stores memories that are often triggered by association with scent or taste and when that connection is broken, that association is lost. For most, this ability is subconscious, but in my case, I have to ground myself in a moment and take note of my surroundings so I am able to make connections to what is happening around me. This is often times a scent or taste, for example, when I get a whiff of the "Villaroma" scent by the air freshener brand, Little Trees, I am able to remember the countless times I was driving around with my friends at night with the windows down --a typical "Netflix Original scene." The same goes for the taste of a Snickers bar or simply looking at a gallon bottle of Big Spring Water both of which make me think of the skatepark in my town where I spend a lot of my time. It's all of these associations that make me think of some of the best moments of my teenage years so I hold these very close to my heart.

This is very difficult to live with though, because when I come home and a family member asks me how my night was or how my day was or what I did, the conversation remains consistent...

"It was good!"

"Oh good, what did you do?"

"Oh well, huh, let me think... I can't remember."

So why exactly was it good? If I can't remember, why was it good? How do I know it was actually good? Honestly, if I can't remember, it might have been completely awful but how would I know? I can't remember. But when I actually think hard, and I mean really hard, I can remember! I have to retrace my "steps" from as early as when I woke up and then I can think about the clothes that I picked out and usually I can boost my recall of that part of the day based on how my clothes felt or looked. Strange right? But it works. May I remind you, fellow reader, it's all about association. So what makes a memory mean something? What makes that one stand out amongst the rest? Well for me, it's important because they were able to slip through the net of utter blankness where most of my experiences have been caught. In comparison to the rest of my life,

they could be some of the most insignificant happenings but they are still important to me.

Let's get down to the science of why brain functions the way it does. There is a part of the brain called the amygdala that stores information including memories, "...the contextual information about these events – where and when they happened—is recorded in the brain's hippocampus, whereas the emotional component of the memory is stored separately, in a brain region called the amygdala. 'The amygdala can store information with either a positive or negative valence, and associate it with a memory,'..." Investigator Susumu Tonegawa quoted in a study led by Howard Hughes at MIT.

My brain injury was caused by intense whiplash causing my head to jerk forward therefore damaging the amygdala which is located at the frontal part of the brain. Now, the consequences of damaging the amygdala include trouble with memory formation, emotional sensitivity, trouble learning and remembering as well as increased fear. In my case, I had and still have trouble with memory and learning but I actually have decreased fear and which results in me failing to make the right decision when it comes to my own safety. With this in mind, you would think I would be able to remember the scary experiences I put myself in but I don't which might be for the better.

Is there a solution? As of now, no. There is no "cure" for brain damage but there are things to possibly boost recall such as a protein powder-like substance called Brain Sustain . "BrainSustain™ represents more than 30 years of neuroscience research. Designed to address brain health, structure, and function, BrainSustain contains a variety of nutrients and cofactors that support mitochondrial energy production, antioxidant systems, neurotransmitter production, and cell membrane integrity." Sound pretty promising right? Well it is; I have been taking this "stuff" for the past 6 months out of pure frustration of the majority of my best days being blacked out and the memories of those days being caught it that net I mentioned before.

Why does this matter? Because no matter if you consider yourself a romantic or a realist, as I mentioned previously, our memories shape who we are and are built up to become our own personal histories or backstories. Imagine you are someone who has been secluded your whole life, separate from any human interaction, separate from the outside world, you would still have to eat; well there's something that could be a memory, eating, the taste of whatever you ate. Of course this situation is virtually impossible, there are seven billion people on this planet and if you weren't ever exposed to the outside world, how would you know how to do anything? Anyway. All I'm saying is that memory and memories are important and even more important to someone like me who's memories can escape them as quick as they came.

## Works Cited

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