



A BRAIN CELL ROUNDTABLE

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Cells One, Two and Three have gathered for their meeting inside Mili's brain. The rest either don't exist or are doing whatever brain cells do. These three are special, however, because of their exceptional slacking abilities. They don't do much, but they give it all in mindless chatter every night.

One: Okay folks, it's time for our nightly chit-chat. What's up?

Two: There's this really obscure, avant-garde song Mili's been listening to on repeat. Personally, I don't like it, maybe because it's not her style.

Three: Don't worry, it's just a phase. It'll pass before you know it. Play the song anyway.

They listen to the song together.

One: Yeah, I don't like it either. But let's keep it in the background. Three, any words?

Three: I'm feeling very philosophical tonight. What's the meaning of life? What does true happiness feel like? Can peace be achieved without violence?

They ponder upon other rhetorical questions, leading to a heated debate.

Two: Alright, all this musing is making me—

One: Yeah, enough of this. We need something lighter.

Two: Remember that one time Mili got into a fight at school over a pencil?

Three: Two, she was only eight! Leave it alone!

Two: But it's still funny.

Three: And extremely embarrassing, because she got detention afterwards.

They all laugh anyway, recounting the memory in detail.

Two: It's funny how Mili doesn't even get scolded anymore, given the amount of classes she skips.

One: I know, right? How does she not get caught?

Three: Guess we could put some effort into helping her skip classes more effectively. Our other pals are doing all the hard work.

Two: Or we could put some guilt into her. At this rate, she'll end up failing this semester.

One: Let's add some longing as well.

Three: Longing? For whom? Don't tell me it's for that plain-faced celebrity.

They laugh.

One: Seriously though, it's kind of sad to see Mili hasn't fallen in love with anyone yet.

Two: All these love songs, even the one I'm playing as we speak, and she still can't relate to the feeling.

Three: Neither can we. If she did have a genuine crush on somebody right now, we'd only talk—wait, is Mili getting up?

Two: I think so.

One: Eh, never mind. Maybe she needs to pee.

Mili realised that this was going to be another sleepless night. She went outside and opened the fridge even though she wasn't hungry, she realised eating now would be a bad idea and just had some water. She went back to her room and got under the covers once again, and begged sleep to grace her closed eyes.

Adhora Ahmed daydreams too much. Send her reality checks at adhora.ahmed@gmail.com

Is the Internet making us forget stuff?

H. RAINAK KHAN REAL

"Raise your hand if you can share some interesting facts about Nordic countries," the Professor declared, minutes after entering the class.

I instinctively raised my hand upon hearing the term "Nordic", because I remembered reading a great article on the countries of northern Europe two days ago. With the Professor's signal, I stood up to share my knowledge with the rest of the class. I froze.

I realised that even though the article was full of information and I enjoyed reading it, I didn't bother remembering the facts, partly because the link will always be available on the Internet so I can just come back later, but mostly because I was continually distracted due to my online multi-tasking: switching between reading, googling things that needed a second look, and checking my Facebook feed for no good reason.

It is very easy to get lost within the ocean of information available on the Internet, but very difficult to retain the stuff we actually need. That's because our short-term memory and long-term memory function quite differently.

Our short-term memory is of limited capacity which is exposed to the constant bombardment of information from the real world and unless the information is transferred to our long-term memory, we tend to forget them. However, once our long-term memory retains the information, we become capable of not only recalling, but also of innovation and critical thinking. But this transfer requires effort: concentration and time. Distractions only hinder this transfer and cause us to lose

information.

Research has found that instead of relying on our memory, if we tend to rely on smart devices to remember the information for us, it is more likely that we will forget it ourselves. Another study suggests that taking too many photos of our memorable moments negatively affects our ability to remember the details, which was termed as the photo-taking-impairment effect. Hence, it is no exaggeration to say that the Internet and technology are influencing our memory, particularly on our short-term memory.

However, there is no scientific evidence that the extensive use of technologies deters our learning capacity.

So, if we cannot recollect a specific thing at a particular moment, it is not because our memory has failed us, rather it is more likely that we didn't pay enough attention to retain that piece of information into our long-term memory, perhaps due to stress, distraction or multitasking.

References

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H. Rainak Khan Real has stopped searching for the elixir of eternal youth, instead he has begun searching for the potion that can slow down the time. Send him clues at rainak-khanreal@gmail.com

