

Name game

Some of us are blessed with the ability to remember names. Turns out those who can are rare indeed, because they have had memory chips implanted in their brains following alien abductions. Other than those three or four people in the entire world, remembering names is a chore most of us fail horribly at. Here's a few quick tips on making sure we don't mumble when we meet someone we've met before but can't recall who they are.

Association

Relate their names to something. Could be a mannerism, an object, even the job they do. I remembered a Mahfuz because I noticed he loved wearing ties. He even knew a lot about ties. And ties are like a noose. Tie->noose->Mahfoose. If it rhymes with the association, it makes it easier to recall.

I am a car guy so it's easier for me to recall people's names by the cars they drive. Shoaib with the custom gunmetal grey Carina GT? Sure. The trick is to have a couple of minutes worth of conversation. You can find things they like or dislike. Or even things they do. I knew a Rubel who worked in real estate. The connection I made was "old buildings->rubble->Rubel".

Stamp the name on their head

A study says a good way to remember names is to label people



quite literally. Well, not quite. You meet someone, visually label their names on their forehead. Apparently, Franklin Roosevelt did this and he knew the names of everyone on his staff (and everyone he met). You can emboss, print or even visualize it in your favorite

color. Just don't approach the person with a real marker in your hand.

Play brain games

The best trick of course is to train your brain. Quick references are usually stored in short term

memory. Repeated call eventually stores it into the longer term memory. A lot of us don't want to use our brains too much because we like to leave it fresh for future use. Or something like that. Well, that doesn't help. A fresh brain is of no use. Look at politicians. They don't

use theirs at all.

A brain is like a muscle. The more you train it, the better it works. So stimulate it. Play brain games. Sudoku and crosswords are extremely helpful. They challenge you no matter how well you know the game. And like a muscle, the brain cannot grow unless you challenge it continuously.

Since you're a modern person, you're probably always on your smartphone. Try Lumosity. It is a game designed by neuroscientists and is reported to "improve the memory of 97 percent of users in only 10 hours of playing". Even a mentally challenging video game can enhance memory and cognitive abilities. Strategy games like the good old Age of Empires is a great example. People over age 60 have been found to manage tasks better after having repeated sessions of video games. Just don't overdo the whole gaming bit because then you won't get any sunshine and meet any new people to remember names of.

Develop attention like a ninja

When all is said and done, nothing beats paying attention. We are too busy checking phone pings and beeps and calculating what the next three things we will be doing. Zero in on the person you are talking to. They love the attention and you can remember better when distraction is avoided. When we don't pay

attention, our brain doesn't care about where the memory is stored. It basically throws the information in a random corner under some old socks sometimes. The brain is like that.

Now how do you become more attentive? Focus by meditating ten minutes a day. In one study, researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston showed that regular meditation causes the brain's cerebral cortex to thicken. According to the study, thickening occurs because meditation increases the size of blood vessels and the blood flow in the region.

Cheat sheet

When all else fails or there is too much to remember, keep a notepad in hand and jot down names and couple of facial/personality features to try and remember later. Smartphones can come to help. It may seem odd to scurry off to a corner to scribble notes so get hold of a good voice recognition device. Many current smartphones come bundled with it. Pretend you're talking to someone as you dictate to your phone. Or to Siri on the iOMGPhone.

So there you have it. Next time there's a business meet and you need to remember names, now you have a better chance at recalling the name Anji instead of Ninja.

EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

Why play games to improve memory?

The latest research was the product of a four-year \$300,000 study done at the University of California, San Francisco. Neuroscientists there, led by Dr. Adam Gazzaley, worked with developers to create NeuroRacer, a relatively simple video game in which players drive and try to identify specific road signs that pop up on the screen, while ignoring other signs deemed irrelevant.

One of the main early findings of the study reinforced just how challenging it is to multitask successfully, particularly as

PHIL WAS LIVING PROOF THAT 47 YEARS OF PLAYING FACEBOOK GAMES NEARLY NON-STOP, HAD CAUSED NO ILL EFFECTS



people age. People in their 20s experienced a 26 percent drop in performance when they were asked to try to drive and identify signs at the same time (rather than just identify the signs without driving). For people in their 60s to 80s, the performance drop was 64 percent.

But after the older adults trained at the game, they became more proficient than untrained people in their 20s. The performance levels were sustained for six months, even without additional training. Also, the older adults performed better at memory and attention tests outside the game.

QUICK TIP 2

It's crazy hot outside. If you are going for an interview, you might want to avoid wearing a complete suit. Employers will only think you are desperate to get the job. Plus, there is added chances of sweating involved. Don't ignore the tie though. Because, you know, they are awesome! Go ahead and try not to sweat.



What leads to graduate unemployment?

Mr. Kumar Murshid, head of Career Services, BRAC University talks to Asif Kamal, Sub-editor of Next Step regarding the factors that lead to graduate unemployment.

Asif Kamal: Graduate unemployment is more of a crisis than it appears to be. The oversimplified idea of unemployment shadows the condition of graduate students. What is your opinion on the matter?

Kumar Murshid: If we really want to consider what happens to graduating students, it is necessary to consider the condition of entering students. Because the intake is closely related to output. Students from diverse backgrounds come together in a university and it's quite a challenge for universities to shape them up to an acceptable qualitative level to make them attractive to potential employers.

AK: Why are the institutions failing to improve their quality?

Kumar Murshid: The institutions are not entirely to blame here. As I said earlier, there are students from diverse backgrounds in a university and it's challenging for us to develop them equally at the same time. The problem is that we, the universities, in respect of preparing students for the world of work tend to intervene at the last moment (e.g. the last semester of the final year) instead of taking care of issues from the beginning of the academic life of students. Universities need to take a serious interest in a long-term plan to facilitate

employment opportunities instead of last minute half-baked interventions which currently define our approach to career services.

AK: What exactly are you proposing?

Kumar Murshid: What I'm saying is, a lot of care is needed for first year students. They are young adults and in need of proper direction. I do realize that some students are not serious enough to understand their responsibilities. You can either find out the root of this problem or just accept it and do what needs to be done. Give them proper direction

and our recently restructured 'Professional Skills Development Program' in their final year. The PSDP essentially imparts essential learning in terms of honing CVs and the interview and presentation skills of graduating students while giving them direct experience of employers and their priorities through mock interviews and internship placements.

AK: Any specific problem from the students' end?

Kumar Murshid: I believe making the wrong (subject) choice has been a major problem for a major number

allow them to make informed subject and career choices.

AK: A piece of advice for the students who will be looking for jobs soon...

Kumar Murshid: Using language competently is crucial. In terms of a global language, English is an important tool in the international market. Speaking more than one language gives you a much needed head start.

Kumar Murshid: I believe making the wrong (subject) choice has been a major problem for a major number

into employment. All students should be treated equally and supported adequately so that their true potential can be realized. For this to happen, students and faculties need to be sufficiently evolved as human beings; each taking responsibility and confronting problems head on within an overall framework of robust academic teaching and learning. The policy framework within universities must prioritize equality of opportunity as an overarching objective to ensure a level playing field for all students and teachers without regard to their ethnicity, gender, race, disability, sexuality or social status.

Students have been instrumental in the momentous political and social changes that have taken place in Bangladesh in 1952 (The Language Movement) in 1968/69 (The peoples uprising) and most notably in 1971 (The Liberation War) which I ran away from home to join at age 16 having just finished my O levels. The Mukti Bahini was described by Time magazine at the time as 'the most educated guerrilla force in the world' because of the sheer number of students within the ranks of the freedom fighters. Our history demonstrates the power of students and their capacity to be true agents of change and yet our present is a sorry litany of tragic stories that speak to the systematic abuse of students by our political classes and their transformation from agents of change to agents of destruction, corruption and regression!

Students and academic institutions must together reclaim the lost glory of our universities and our students!

Speaking more than one language gives you a much needed head start.

right from the beginning. They need to know what the latter part of life looks like and what needs to be done if they want to be successful in life. An approach is needed from the university authority to take care of these students starting from the first year of their university life. We, at BRACU, have recently embarked on a comprehensive student advisory system that will target students from their freshman year and provide support and direction through their sophomore and junior years until they come under the ambit of Career Advisers

of students. There is often no real depth in their decision making process. Rather than what they like doing, they go with the flow without even being sure of where that may lead. Students need to have an intellectual bonding with their subject and be motivated to engage themselves in education seriously. Otherwise, education is just a chore and we all know how much of a drag that can be. Self-knowledge is extremely important. Students need to know what interests them and what inspires them and what makes them passionate. It is this knowledge base that will

skills to become better speakers, writers, and presenters in English so that they can compete effectively in the global market.

AK: What can the institutions do to help students?

Kumar Murshid: Give them an understanding of what professional life looks like. Not only for the best prepared students, but for the worst prepared students too because these are the students who need real help from their respective institutions.

Universities must take greater responsibility for the graduates they produce and the progression of graduates



INTERVIEW: ASIF KAMAL