

WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO REMEMBER THINGS NOW?

SABIBA HOSSAIN

Lately I have been having trouble remembering recent events.

At first, I didn't give this much thought and soon forgot that I was forgetting things. But then, things started getting worse.

I would go online to search for a certain topic, only to forget what I was looking for as soon as I started typing in the search bar. I would open my book and forget why I opened it in the first place. As someone who likes to boast about her strength in focus, this realisation shook me to the core.

Turns out I wasn't the only one.

Memory loss has become a global phenomenon during the pandemic. According to neurologists, stress and anxiety resulting from uncertainty, trauma, and isolation are accountable for our foggy brains.

Lack of social interactions creates a negative impact on our brains, which affects our ability to remember things. Even if one isn't accustomed to social gatherings and enjoys solitude, repetitive schedules and boredom create the same effect on the brain. Because we're deprived of a change in a scenario, our brains' hippocampus region, which is responsible for learning and memory, has started to decelerate.

Similar to a muscle losing its flexibility after being left unused for a long period, the hippocampus region loses its dexterities if not exposed to stimuli like new ambiances or experiences regularly. The lack of proper stimulations from this region is why we fail to focus and remember recent events.

During anxious situations, the sympathetic nervous system gets activated, releasing stress hormones like

adrenaline and noradrenaline. This phenomenon is known as the "fight or flight" response which helped us survive through the ages. But during the pandemic, this occurrence is doing us more harm than good.

The constant release of stress hormones alleviates one's stress level which is directly related to mental health disorders. According to the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* of June 2020, 40 percent of the adults in the US reported to have been struggling with their mental health.

Drawing the line of connection is easy; as we continue to live in stress, we fall into depression and anxiety, our brains take the toll, and our memory cells get destroyed.

To avoid forgetting things, changing one's day-to-day scenarios could be helpful. Take a walk outside, or try to change your interior and move your workstation every once in a while. Make sure every day doesn't seem or feel the same. Take notes so that you don't forget about important tasks.

Experts suggest that this phenomenon of loss of memory and focus is likely to disappear once we succumb to the normal situation. Till then, keep your mental health in check and take a long, deep breath.

References

1. BBC (2020). *Lockdown has affected your memory – here's why.*
2. The New York Times. *Feeling Scatter-brained? Here's Why.*

Sabiba Hossain is a Hufflepuff who plans on going into hibernation every winter but never succeeds. Send her fantasy book recommendations at fb.com/Sabibastro



The Real Cost of Beauty

BUSHRA ZAMAN

Beauty seems to have ever-changing standards.

You might think this only applies to people influenced into believing that they need to change things about themselves to be perfect, but that is not true. You could be absolutely content with how you look until you discover there are simple ways, seemingly in your budget, to slowly change your appearance.

This could be an insecurity you always had, or you could simply be bored and be trying to experiment with new looks for a sense of freshness. You could even be doing so because you want to learn to take better care of yourself, and maybe want to try out a different skincare routine.

Sometimes such changes require upkeep or making continuous additional changes and you do not just end up with more bills to pay, but this also takes an additional emotional toll on you.

Nowadays, there are hair colours to match seasons, nail colours to match moods, different skincare routines for morning and night, and so many different lipstick shades that you may find yourself owning more lipsticks than clothes, with each one being just different enough to warrant a purchase. Beauty products offer so many benefits you may want them because you want to take good care of your skin, as a way to relax after a rough day, or simply to feel luxurious.

What usually results is an overwhelming sense of dependency on beauty products, not necessarily for others, mind you, but to meet your own set of standards for yourself. Or even a need to ensure that your skin receives as many benefits as possible, and the bills for this can add up faster than you think.

Soon, before you know it, you may not feel comfortable enough as you did before to go out bare-skinned, and could even be considering making permanent changes to use makeup less – but even that is costly. Even DIYs with varying results require you to buy extra, say, lemon halves to add sugar to and exfoliate. Bills for beauty products can be expensive or start out as small but add up due to maintenance. You could end up spending more than you initially thought would be required. There is nothing wrong with spending lavishly on things that make you happy if you can afford it, but there are certain things to be kept in mind.

First, variations are what makes you unique. If everyone looked the same, no one would have any individuality in terms of looks or a way of identifying their own beauty. Second, you may absolutely spend on beautification for yourself, even if that means permanent changes, but you should keep a separate budget for it, one that preferably does not hinder other aspects of your life so you can spend guilt-free.

Third, if you'd rather not spend at all, that is absolutely fine as well. It all depends on what you want and not the standards that others set.

May the cost of beauty not be a burden but instead, an option for change should one choose to opt for it.

Bushra Zaman likes books, art, and only being contacted by email. Contact her at bushrazaman31@yahoo.com

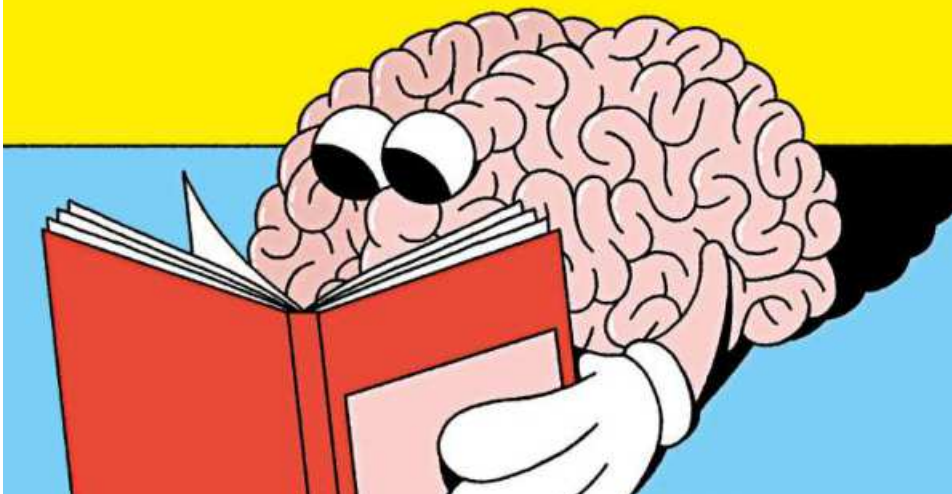


ILLUSTRATION: **GEORGE(S)**