

Memory trouble: In Search of Lost Time

Cathryn Jakobson Ramin writes, in the New York Times Magazine 5 Dec 2004, "a few months ago, as I trudged down the stairs of my office building, deep in my thoughts, I noticed a dark-haired woman waving to me from the window of her car. She looked vaguely familiar, but I couldn't place her. Like quite a few others, she had slipped out of my mental Rolodex. In my brain, the synaptic traces that connected us had frayed. Yet again, I had misplaced an entire human being."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/05/magazine/05MEMORY.html> (
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Her article goes on to describe her concerns

"Why, as I edge toward the end of my 40's, has so much of what I know become impossible to access on demand? Where are the thoughts that spring forth in the shower but evanesce before they can be recorded, the mental lists that shed items on the way to the supermarket? The names of books and movies, actors and authors, le mot juste, the memory of social plans agreed upon in some calendarless situation --- what have become of these? ...

To the person who has misplaced his keys three times in two days or just called a colleague by the wrong name, forgetfulness in middle age can feel like incipient Alzheimer's disease."

And she describes her personal search for help.

"I went first to see Dr. Gary Small, director of U.C.L.A.'s Center on Aging. He's the author of "The Memory Bible," as well as the recently published "The Memory Prescription." After meeting with him, I enrolled in a research study he was conducting; ... As for my neuropsych evaluation, Dr. Karen Miller, a neuropsychologist working on the research study, explained gently that although some of my scores were below those of my peers, when averaged, they were consistent with the impairment that one might expect at my age."

She offers commentary by Dr Oliver Sachs and others.