

A Method to Memory

The other night I was sitting at home in my room watching the Rockets game, and my phone begins to ring. I answer "Hello", and I hear this frantic voice that I recognize as my friend Mandy's. Mandy is a nervous wreck, she has a big bio-chem test in the morning and can't seem to remember a thing. I ask her what kind of information she has, and she tells me she has notes and her book. Now being the nice guy I am, and having just completed learning about memory in my Intro to Psych class, I turned off the T.V. and told her I'd help her learn to memorize things.

The first thing I told her about was a method called rehearsal. I explained that rehearsal involved repeating the information time after time to keep it from fading from her short term memory, or STM. She was a bit confused so I simplified it for her. I reminded her of the other night when she was looking for the number to Pizza Hut in the phone book, and when she found it she started repeating over and over until she got to the phone and could dial it. She was astounded that she was doing this all along and didn't even know it. I then explained another short term memory method known as chunking. She cringed and thought I was talking about the keg party the other night, but I explained that chunking involves taking a large number or word and breaking it down into smaller pieces that could be remembered easier. I also told her that she could chunk together the first letters of a phrase to make it more accessible to her memory retrieval system. I gave her the example of the New York Stock Exchange, or N.Y.S.E. That helped her a lot, but she was concerned whether or not she would remember it all for the final, so I told her the more rehearsing she did, the deeper she would commit the information to memory. She was so happy, she told me she had to go and study for this test. I had never heard someone so excited to study.

About a week later Mandy came up to me after psych class and told me she got an A on her test. She said she owed me and she took me out to lunch. She even told me that she remembered almost everything she studied and she would do well on all her tests thanks to me and my Intro to Psych class.