

WHY DID I *Forget That?*



A gentle guide to
understanding how
memory **really** works

Your brain doesn't store everything

Have you ever walked into a room... and completely forgotten why you went in there?

Or struggled to remember something from earlier today, while being able to recall something from years ago in vivid detail?

It can feel frustrating, and sometimes even worrying.

But in many cases, this isn't a sign that something is wrong.

It's a reflection of how memory is designed to work.

Memory isn't a storage system

In *Why We Remember*, Dr Charan Ranganath explains that memory isn't a perfect recording of the past.

Your brain is constantly filtering information — deciding what feels relevant, meaningful, or worth holding onto.

This means:

- Some things are remembered clearly
- Some things fade quickly
- And some things don't register at all

Not because your memory is failing —
but because it's prioritising.

Small changes can interrupt memory

Sometimes forgetting happens when your brain shifts context.

Moving from one room to another, for example, can create what researchers call an “event boundary” — marking the end of one moment and the start of another.

That shift can make it harder to access what you were just thinking about.

What makes something stick?



**Forgetting isn't always a problem.
It's often just your brain organising experience.**



1. Meaning & emotion

We're more likely to remember things that feel:

- Emotional
- New or unexpected
- Personally meaningful

That's why certain moments feel vivid - they were processed differently at the time.

2. Attention

Memory is closely linked to attention.

The more present and engaged you are in a moment, the more likely it is to be remembered.

When your attention is divided or overloaded, less information is encoded.

3. Volume (modern life)

We're exposed to a huge amount of information every day.

Messages, conversations, content, noise.

When your brain is taking in so much, it simply can't hold onto everything.

Sometimes forgetting isn't about memory.

It's about load.

Instead of asking "Why did I forget that?"

It can be helpful to ask:

"What was my brain focusing on at the time?"

A moment to reflect...

*There's no right or wrong way to answer these.
Just notice what comes up.*

1. **What kinds of things do I tend to remember most easily?**
(e.g. conversations, emotions, details, certain people, specific periods of time)

2. **When do I notice myself forgetting things more often?**
(e.g. when I'm busy, distracted, tired, moving between tasks)

3. **What might my brain have been focusing on instead?**

4. **How do I usually interpret forgetting?**
(e.g. frustration, worry, self-criticism, neutrality)



***Sometimes it's not about improving memory.
It's about understanding how it already works.***

