

All,

Below my name, a recall from 50 years ago on the topic of savants with memory skills.

Recently saw a medical record of someone in the County with 20 medical diagnoses, most I can recall seeing for one patient [6 were psychiatric].

If your patient complains of falling asleep mid-afternoon, what to suggest? Among the choices, 50 mg of caffeine or walk the stairs for ten minutes in their building? A study in Physiology and Behavior found both did better than placebo, and stairs outdid the caffeine.

Of course, those who find the thought of using the stairs to be unpleasant might point out that their Starbucks Venti has 415 mg of caffeine, not just 50, which they could claim will outdo the stair climbing.

Regardless, stair-use is becoming much more common where I work, suggesting we should put up a sign pointing to the stairs with “401 Hungerford Gym.”

Spoilers: Researchers at RAND claim they have disproved the hypothesis that children who own or interact with a pet have better physical and psychological health. Well, now: there are pets, and then there are special pets like the German Shepard who was invaluable to my psychological growth.

Antidepressants/anxiolytics are one of the three most commonly used medications in the United States. Usage:

- During 2011–2014, 12.7% of persons aged 12 and over, 8.6% of males, and 16.5% of females took antidepressant medication in the past month.
- For both males and females, non-Hispanic white persons were more likely to take antidepressant medication compared with those of other race and Hispanic-origin groups.
- One-fourth of persons who took antidepressant medication had done so for 10 years or more.

More information on our newest psychiatric diagnosis, Electronic Device Disorder, from The Atlantic magazine, September, “Has the Smartphone Destroyed a Generation?”

1] Suggests that people born between 1995 and 2012 be called the “iGen generation.”

2] Claims that the arrival of smartphones has radically changed every aspects of the teens’ lives from the nature of their social interactions to their mental health.

3] IGen are more comfortable in their bedrooms than in a car or at a party. Thus, physically safer, less car accidents. Less drinking.

4] Depression and suicides have skyrocketed in that generation and some claim this can be attributed to the phones.

5] The physical isolation created by smartphones might explain the decrease in the homicide rate of this generation.

6] 12th graders in 2015 were going out less often than 8th graders in 2009.

7] Article claims that iGens prefer texting to actual conversations.

8] Only 56% of iGens date as compared to 85% in prior generations.

9] For iGens, virtual space has replaced hanging out at the roller rink, the pool, the playgrounds, etc.

10] “All screen activities are linked to less happiness, and all nonscreen activities are linked to more happiness.”

11] Nearly all iGens sleep with their phones, which may contribute to insomnia and the conditions caused by insomnia.

From lakphy desk:

1] Last Tuesday’s NY Times, page D6, on exercise as a weight-loss strategy said that most people who start exercising lose fewer pounds than would be expected because exercise can increase hunger and thus food consumption. Not mentioned is that muscle weighs more than fat.

Roger

The New Yorker’s “The Mystery of S, the Man With An Impossible Memory,” reviews Alexander Lurie’s study of a mind that had amazing recall. The man, who would become known in the psychological literature as S, had been sent by his boss, a section editor at a Moscow newspaper where S was a reporter. That morning, the editor had noticed that S did not take any notes when the daily assignment was made. When he confronted S about this, S explained that he didn’t need to write anything down; he simply remembered. The editor picked up a newspaper and read at length from it, challenging S to repeat exactly everything back to him. When S did so verbatim, the editor sent him to a memory clinic “to have his head examined.”

At the clinic, “Lurie began reeling off lists of random numbers and words and asking S to repeat them, which he did. More than fifteen years later, Lurie examined him and found he could still recall the numbers and words. Lurie concluded that S’s memory had no distinct limits.”

S reminds me of another savant, Mr. Paleshort [not his real name], a patient I had fifty years ago. Mr. Paleshort's memory was impressive:

- 1] Asked to add 95, 64, 28, 88, 52, and 74, he repeated the numbers and said "401."
- 2] Asked to multiply 324 by 253, he thought for five seconds and gave the correct answer of "81,972."
- 3] Asked to give the weather on a day two years ago, he nailed it.
- 4] Ask to say what color socks I wore when we met three years previously, he got it correct.
- 5] When nursing students told him about the movie David and Lisa, which had a rhymer, he began answering the staff with rhymes.
- 6] When we had a piano brought to the ward, using two fingers, he would bang out a tune he had only heard once.
- 7] Some savants are calendar calculators. When I gave Mr. Paleshort a date, any day between 1900 and 2100, he could quickly tell me what day of the week it was, e.g., "Tuesday."

When I got Mr. Paleshort's trust, he told me the calendar repeats itself every 28 days. So, I began memorizing the 28-day cycles. If January 1, 1901, fell on a Tuesday, then it would fall on a Tuesday in 1929, 1957, 1985, etc. Knowing what day of the week January 1st fell set up the days of the week for the rest of the year. Of course, leap years were different and predictable.

To accomplish calendar calculating, the total number of relationships I had to know was 56, less than the 76 relationships one has to know when memorizing the multiplication tables up to 12.

As part of the 1967 Saint Elizabeths Medical Society Thirtieth Annual meeting, after I demonstrated calendar calculating, I had a psychologist report on the Wechsler's Memory Scales's results of Mr. Paleshort and of me, and was surprised to hear that my overall results were much higher than Mr. Paleshort's, that even though his memory feats were broader than any savants I had read about. His overall recall was less than "normal." For example, he probably did poorly on repeating back a story.