



Forgetting: Myths, Perils and Compensations

Douwe Draaisma

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In his highly praised book *The Nostalgia Factory*, renowned memory scholar Douwe Draaisma explored the puzzling logic of memory in later life with humor and deep insight. In this compelling new book he turns to the “miracle” of forgetting. Far from being a defect that may indicate Alzheimer’s or another form of dementia, Draaisma claims, forgetting is one of memory’s crucial capacities. In fact, forgetting is essential.

Weaving together an engaging array of literary, historical, and scientific sources, the author considers forgetting from every angle. He pierces false clichés and asks important questions: Is a forgotten memory lost forever? What makes a colleague remember an idea but forget that it was yours? Draaisma explores “first memories” of young children, how experiences are translated into memory, the controversies over repression and “recovered” memories, and weird examples of memory dysfunction. He movingly examines the impact on personal memories when a hidden truth comes to light. In a persuasive conclusion the author advocates the undervalued practice of “the art of forgetting”—a set of techniques that assist in erasing memories, thereby preserving valuable relationships and encouraging personal contentment.

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