

# PARISH NURSE *corner*

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## *Memory Lapses Are Normal ~ Memory Mechanics*

For everyone who has ever entered a room and forgotten why, who has left the house and can't remember locking the door, or who has trouble recalling names or faces, there is hope. You are not going crazy. Brain researcher, Dr. Barry Gordon, says nobody's memory is glitch proof.

Dr. Gordon is a behavioral neurologist, cognitive neuroscientist and experimental psychologist at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. He recently addressed aging baby boomers who think forgetfulness means senility is just around the corner.

**Why don't people remember the same event the same way?** You see the event from different perspectives. What you see has a different significance for you than for somebody else, so you interpret it differently.

Memory doesn't work like a camera. We don't choose to save in our memories what really happened in the world. We save what happened in our minds. You keep only what is important to you, as well as just the gist of events, not details.

Now look what happens to that memory over the years. You drag it out of storage and every time you do, a piece may be missing. You chew on it, link it to different experiences from the past and present, edit it again to meet the moment.

Also, other things are at work. When information enters my mind, how I split it up, and where I store it in my brain helps determine how I will remember it. My mind will split it up differently from yours.

**Do memory abilities decrease with age?** You begin to show some changes in your 30's. People complain more about forgetfulness in their 40's and 50's, with a decline in the 60's, but the curve here is very gradual.

Generally, what goes first is speed, the quickness of the process. This has a big impact. If it takes longer to remember, it is more likely some things will go right by you.

It is a myth that you lose some 10,000 brain cells daily. It is possible you lose a few brain cells in some areas of the brain, and some brain connections are changing.

It isn't the number of cells you lose that is important, but how you use the ones you have - how you put facts together, the connections you make between the facts. This is the edge we human memories have over computers.

### **The Things We Forget**

Names - 63%

Telephone Numbers - 60%

Words - 53%

Repeating a Story - 49%

What was said - 49%

Faces - 42%

Directions - 41%

What you were doing - 41%

What you have just done,  
such as lock the door - 38%

*May we all experience the comfort and peace that comes from our great God!*

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