

How stress aids memory

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Retrieving memory content under stress does not work very well. However, stress can be helpful when it comes to saving new information—especially those that are emotionally relevant in stressful situations. At the Ruhr-Universität Bochum, a team of cognitive psychologists headed by Prof Dr Oliver T. Wolf study these correlations. The RUB's science magazine *RUBIN* reports on the results.

Faked Job Interview Triggers Stress

The team tested how well people remember items from a faked [job interview](#) that was conducted either in a friendly or a stress-triggering atmosphere - depending on how the panel behaved towards the applicant. Stressed individuals remembered more items from the interview than non-stressed individuals. In particular, objects that were handled by members of the panel during the interview stuck in the memory. It would therefore appear that forming memories depends on how closely an item is connected to the stressor. "The evolutionary advantage might have been as follows: emotionally important items are more relevant in [stressful situations](#) than neutral ones, which is why they get stored more efficiently," says Oliver Wolf.

Linked With Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

These findings are also indicative of mechanisms that play a role in [post-traumatic stress disorder](#). In case of PTSD, people who have experienced a life-threatening situation are regularly haunted by memories and nightmares that are linked to the event in question.

More information: A detailed article with pictures can be found in the online magazine *RUBIN*, the RUB's science magazine:
rubin.rub.de/en/featured-topic-stress/memory

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