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Forgetting

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Definitions

Forgetting

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Forgetting is defined as the lack of availability, partial or total, temporary or permanent, of memories of lived events or of information previously encountered, processed or learned.

Forgetting occurs when something is disregarded, erased or transformed during encoding or retrieval. After the learning phase, information may be inaccessible because of inhibition, removal or interference.

Forgetting identifies the difference between what has been encoded, consciously or unconsciously, and what is remembered, that is, what is available for retrieval, either explicitly or implicitly. It manifests with omission errors (with or without awareness of not remembering) or commission errors (false memories, intrusions, and substitutions). Different error types reflect different neurobiological and cognitive mechanisms.

Forgetting is an inherent part of all memory components and reflects their normal functioning; it is essential for categorization, learning and abstract reasoning as well as for maintaining social and affective relationships. Disproportionate or abnormally fast forgetting are pathological signs revealing memory dysfunction. Lack of forgetting is also abnormal.

Forgetting could be induced voluntarily to preserve feelings and pursue personal goals in everyday life or following specific instructions in experimental settings.

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