

# 119-memory-palace-productivitycast

Fri, 12/31 1:45PM 52:43

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

memory palace, components, story, recall, mnemonics, memorize, remember, imagery, memory, create, tying, mind, virtues, point, method, loci, order, kinds, location, talking

## SPEAKERS

Art Gelwicks, Voiceover Artist, Raymond Sidney-Smith, Francis Wade

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Voiceover Artist 00:00

Are you ready to manage your work and personal world better to live a fulfilling productive life, then you've come to the right place. ProductivityCast the weekly show about all things productivity, here are your hosts, Ray Sidney-Smith and a goose open out with Francis Wade and art Gelwicks.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:17

Welcome back, everybody to productivity cast, the weekly show about all things personal productivity. I'm Ray Sidney-Smith.



Francis Wade 00:23

I'm Augusto Pinaud. I'm Francis Wade.



Art Gelwicks 00:25

And I'm Art Gelwicks.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 00:26

Welcome, gentlemen, and welcome to listeners. For another, I think action packed episode of ProductivityCast. Today, we are going to be talking about something that goes by many names, but is all the same thing. We're going to be talking about the method of loci, also known as the memory palace method, or the Journey method. And what we're going to do today is really talk about its history. I just want to go through a little bit about what the history of the method of loci is, then we will talk about the method itself, how it actually operates, what are the

functions of the method, the primary part of our conversation will then center on whether any of us have used the memory palace technique or the journey of method, technique, and what our experiences are with other kinds of mnemonics in either studies or at work. And then we'll close out with maybe some productive uses for you. And where you can apply the Journey method. Let's get into first, the history and the idea of the Journey method. The method of loci really started out in the concept of the ancient Greeks and Romans talking about the idea of memory, and how the brain really works, how the mind works. In this particular case, the, the ancient Greeks and Romans had a different perception or conception of where the mind lived. So we won't get into that. But in essence, it was used for memorizing everything when you studied in ancient Greece or ancient Rome, you were memorizing full treatises, and all of these things were required of you in order to be a learned individual, the mnemonic system known now as the Journey method, method of loci or the memory palace was developed. And so this is an very ancient concept. And so what I want to do is just cover what and how I understand the method. And then gentlemen, you can jump in with any questions that you might have. So the way in which I think about the Journey method is four distinct components. I use the acronym *al* *l* *s* to remember it generally. And it stands for Association, imagery, location, and story. And the idea is, is that the more outlandish and connected pieces are in a specific location connected to a story, then the more likely we are to remember those things. And more importantly, in that order. And many people may know the Joshua force story. This is a guy who was not a memory, genius of any kind. But he decided to use this technique and won the World memory championship the following year, and he did a TED talk. And I'll post the Embed of the TED talk in the show notes. But in essence, he used the method of loci, he used this technique in order to be able to remember all of these cards in a deck and all these other memory, you know, tests that they put him through. And so the idea is, is that you come up with something that you want to remember, say it's a deck of cards. And in essence, that deck of cards becomes associated with something. So for example, you might decide that the the jack of hearts is a family member. Now this is something that you have an association with, and so therefore, it can be tied or anchored to something that you already know. And so generally, when we think about the method of loci, we're thinking about what are the things that we know what are the things that we're associated with so many memory champions, what they do is they take every letter in the alphabet, and they associated with a particular thing that they already know, a may or may stand in, as an apple. And now this leads us to the next point, which is that imagery, if we take that Jack of Hearts, and we're thinking about that family member, because maybe they look like the jack of hearts on the card. Now that creates a connection, but we also know have an image in our mind, we then placed them in a location and this is where the memory palace really comes into play and why they call it the memory palace or the mind palace, because you pick a spot in physical space, and then you recreate the journey, the story in that physical space. Now that physical space can be a very large place like the planet or the solar system, or the universe or a can be a desk literally just the space on your desk and you different you choose different points on the space on your desk. And so from there, you go through the process of telling the story of what happens to those things in that order. And by doing so you're able to remember all of the pieces. And as many people note, the more outlandish the story, the crazier the things are, the more novel it is to your brain, and therefore the the likelier that you will remember those components connected to each other. So through association or connection to things that you already know, imagery, placing them into physical locations, and then telling a story you're capable of combining. In this case, memory champions will sometimes can sometimes combine hundreds or 1000s of data points together in this method, and all they're doing is telling a story. And they're, they're telling themselves a story so that they can remember that story, as these pieces are being put in front of them. And what happens is, they can then speed up the process of memory for them. That's not particularly case for us. But for these folks who are in these memory championships, they

are in essence, rapidly creating those stories by connecting those associated images, which are kind of pre populated in their mind, right? A is for apple, B is for boy, C is for cat, and so on and so forth. And now as soon as they see those components, they're capable of starting to tell that story. Oh, the Apple was picked up by the boy, the boy then saw a cat. Now, as I said, you want to make the story outlandish, you want to make it exciting and interesting. And that way your brain would be more likely to remember it. So you can say something like, you know, the Apple flew out of the sky and whacked the boy in the head, and the boy fell on top of the cat and the cat screeched, and, you know, and so on, and so forth. So you start to create these really provocative stories, these journeys of all of these connected data points. And when you see them in the locations, where they're supposed to be, that actually connects inside your mind to it maps it out, your mind maps out a physical physical location in that sense. So that's, in essence, the method of loci as best as I can kind of explain it. So from there, where do we go from here? What are the what are what are your experiences with either the method of loci or with other mnemonics that you've used, maybe in university or in other areas of your professional life,

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Art Gelwicks 07:42

this is a tough one for me, because I've never had any personal success with this. Mnemonics themselves have always been a struggle point, much less, you know, apples and houses with Uncle Bob. I mean, I, it almost to me feels like more work to try and remember this stuff than less because now I got to remember all this other stuff. And remember the story along with this other thing that I hope will help me remember, I've I have to admit, I really struggled with even where to start with this I've used. There are some mnemonics that I use. But even those take a lot of work to get to that point where they become second nature and their recall. I mean, it sounds great. It sounds like it would be fantastic to be able to just recall stuff like that. But I don't know, it just sounds like a really heavy lift to me.

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Francis Wade 08:39

I have used mnemonic, well, I can't say I use them, like I invented them. But I still remember the ones that was taught when I was a kid. So aren't that wondering if there's not some age component, that after you get past a particular point, the effort it takes to embedding a mnemonic is significant, but teach a kid a mnemonic, and they'll have it for life. You know, when I get together with my alumni groups from prep school and high school, I mean, we can rattle off mnemonics that we learned all day long mnemonics tunes, you know, the things that we had to memorize, to a particular tune on like ABC, but things like that, and we can rattle them off all day long as if it were yesterday. So I suspect there's something something to do with how young you are when you learn some of these things. And at our age, we need something like memory palace to create as much of a shock to our system that as we had when we were that young, and he's so overt and require this effort.

A

Art Gelwicks 09:44

So let me be clear about what we're talking about here is really taking this stuff and moving it to long term memory. Not just short term recall of you know, that was that person's name I just met down the hallway.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 09:57

We have short term memory, which is memory that we know right now and pretty much dissipates very quickly, we then know ourselves to have somewhat of a working memory. And by the way, there's a more advanced thought on this. So I'm just giving some very, very basics here, what you're calling sort of short term memory, we have working memory, which is that memory, we know and can use for some period of time. But over time diminishes because it's only useful and practical in this phase. And then there's long term memory, which is memory that you can kind of unearth from some period of time later on. Mnemonics can work in, in both in all three categories, I think. So there can be a short term need to remember and recall that information right now, then there is the idea that you may want to remember things for, say, a test and then forget it, say, you know, chemistry, you, you have to take this chemistry exam, and you just want to get through the chemistry exam. And then you don't care about anything, remembering any of that, if you're 22, when you're 42. And then, of course, there are pieces like a professional certification, which you're more apt to, I think us and our listeners, which is that I want to be able to remember the things that I'm being tested on, because I will use them in my real world, I will need to know those things, practically speaking, when I get there. So there's kind of those three stages. But if you're going to do a presentation, as you know, I do a lot of presentation work, I want to make sure that the pithy quotation that I hook everybody with at the beginning, I want to be able to remember that verbatim, and be able to do that without any aid. And that's very helpful for me if I have the right mnemonic to be able to make that happen. So these are they're just different practical components to each of these.

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Francis Wade 11:44

So you memorize those opening statements before before your talk, I have to read every single one don't because I've tried that and then gone up there and gone Hama Hama, Hama. We use a mnemonic to remember a court,



Raymond Sidney-Smith 12:00

of course, yes.

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Francis Wade 12:01

How do you do that?



Raymond Sidney-Smith 12:03

There, there are various types. Sometimes I use an acronym, right? So similar to like, you know, mnemonics in music, right? Every Good Boy Does Fine. You know, for the the treble clef, there, there are the treble staff, there are all kinds of mnemonics that are out there that we can use in order to be able to remember things many times for me, it is better if I know an acronym, akin to like Roy G. Biv. Right, you know, which are the colors of the spectrum, being able to remember those components is helpful for me to be able to then tie to an existing latticework.

And then remember that thing. So I might take those colors, right, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet, and take that course of colors, and then map out the quotation based on that. And it's not synesthetic in the sense that like I'm not, I'm just capable of understanding and remembering when I see color so much more. And I don't know why. So many times for me, I will take a quotation, and I will place them into colors. So when I see visually, those words, I will see the colors associated with them. And that reinforces the memory. And I'm not quite sure that works for everybody, but just does for me, I kid you not this is just a very simple technique, I go into Google Docs, and I just highlight the words in ROY G BIV. So that there is a clear pattern going forward in terms of colors. And so I can see the spectrum in my eyes, when I close my eyes, I can see it very clearly. And that's how I remember those types of quotations. So we have different ways in which we can actually manifest this Now, mind you, if you asked me right now, what quotation I use last week in my last presentation couldn't tell you just, you know, it's just not it's not going to, it's not going to surface. But it works for me to be able to deliver the presentation. And so that's the kind of work that I think is very useful. I know that a lot of have in restaurants and in retail environments where you need to remember something you need to the customer comes in, they tell you something, and then you need to go get it from inventory, or you need to go place an order in, say a restaurant environment where someone gives you an order, you can use these techniques to be able to remember all kinds of information, that's again, going to be that short term memory component. You may not remember it, you know, a day from now, but you'll remember it in that moment for that purpose.

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Art Gelwicks 14:28

That brings up a really interesting point. I've always wondered when you go into a restaurant and you have a waiter or waitress there, and you've got a party of like six people and they stand there and say, Okay, I'll take your order, and they don't write anything down. I've always been fascinated by that. I'm like, How the heck are you remembering this? I can't remember my own order without looking at the menu three times. How I would love to know how they're keeping that street in that working memory because honestly ask They really don't care. I mean, once it's entered into the system, it's done. But how to keep that stuff organized. And if I think about the the mnemonics piece, I do use some mnemonics. I have those for reference, and I'm trying to decide what kinds of things are really worth going through this level of effort to like etched in stone of my head. I mean, it's not, I wouldn't want to memorize everything this way. I mean, good Lord, we talk about all the time, get stuff out of your head, don't keep it in there. But yet, now we're talking about blocking some things in what what to you guys seems like something that would be worth keeping locked in your head?



Raymond Sidney-Smith 15:43

Well, for mathematicians, or scientists, they would be certain types of formulas that they have to use all the time. Maybe there's enough time between those formulae, that you would not necessarily be able to recall it unless you actually worked on bringing that into your long term memory so that you can submit it those times. For me, especially I just think quotations because there are so many different passages of books that I've read. And in order to be able to understand them better, I have to dwell on them. And many times, it then becomes a piece for me to be able to recall in a way that then allows me to understand it, and also communicate the message behind that quotation, and not for not for the kind of vapid value of being able to

say something pithy, like, as I said, before, you know, hooking someone in a presentation is very different than having a substantive quotation that actually tells you something. The other component for me is poetry, other things that are in the literary art world, where I want to be able to, like I've one of my favorite poems in the world is random Maria real key poem. And I love all of my Angeles work. Setting those two memory are things that I know that I enjoy, and I love being able to summon those at will. And that's not something that I would be able to do unless I had structure in order to do that.

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Art Gelwicks 17:09

Yeah, for some reason, I got this mental image of, excuse me actually getting relatively good at this, and then my mind palace winds up looking like a hoarders house.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 17:19

That's the that's the remarkable thing about the the the memory palace technique, you can take the same space and use it over and over and over again, it's kind of like playing in a doll house, you could take the dolls out and put the dolls back in and rearrange it each time. And it turns out that our brains are capable of separating those different scenes, just like in a story. So if you're telling different stories in the same space, you can actually have ad infinitum numbers of stories, they don't actually get confused if you give enough concentration on developing the story. And that's where I think Ailes comes together, association, imagery, location, and story. All of those pieces, association imagery, and location are all important components. But it's the story itself, that actually binds together those components in the order you want it to, in order to be able to create that. So whether you're tying together numbers, letters, digits, colors, you name the component, as long as you're tying them together, using story, you're capable of better creating that memory that you'll then be able to summon out. Well, that's because

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Francis Wade 18:31

we were better at recalling stories. Is that the logic?



Raymond Sidney-Smith 18:36

Yes. I mean, fundamentally, our brains are designed our kind of our mid brains are designed around the concept of story, we have an kind of the base level parts of our brains are designed around location, which is where we are likely to see ourselves in a space, or see a space and no danger, right imagery and location. And so we associate things with fight the fight or flight, you know, fight flight or freeze response, right. So this is clearly very, you know, like deep brain associated, and I'm not a neuroscientist, so I can't, I can't say that I know this with with great depth. But from my own readings, my understanding is that we are very acute to recognizing images very quickly, and deciding whether or not that is something that we find to be dangerous or not dangerous. And so therefore, in that deep kind of reptilian brain are capable of handling that location part, that association part and the imagery part. And then from there, we step up a level and then story is kind of that midbrain piece. We don't really need our

prefrontal cortex except to decide what to say, how to summon that information. That's a choice. So it's our midbrain that's doing that work of capturing all of those components and designing that story. And so that's like the function of that the Brain is that is the story, which is why there's a lot of discussion in therapy and lots of discussions and other component places about how story manages our emotional regulation, or how emotional regulation happens. And all of those things. So I think that's, that's where that's happening. Okay. That's, that's mostly conjecture on my part. But I think that's where it's happening.

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Art Gelwicks 20:20

So I'm going to go back to a point that I, how is this easier than just outright memorizing it? So if I've got let's take the Gettysburg Address, I'll use that as an example. Maybe it's the first, you know, paragraph I want to recall as a direct quotation, why wouldn't I just sit down and memorize that? Why would I come up with some sort of a construct in my memory palace to be able to recall it is, is that second one actually easier than just reciting it enough times that I can repeat it by rote

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Francis Wade 20:49

if I had to memorize the Gettysburg Address the way I would do it, I would do it verbally or audibly, rather, I will recite it and then repeat the recitation of it. Because the my in my mind the way I remember things like that is by hearing by forming the words with my mouth when my my vocal cords and then hearing them in my with my ear, so that the link between speaking and hearing is where I get my that repetition is where I remember from it's not not this when it comes to words, like an address, it's not visually, I tend to remember them by the words by the song. I don't know if that if that's different. But I think the memory palace is well, I don't know if it's more about things that you can't remember back in that way. So not that address, but more of a string of numbers or things that are hard to remember based on their stone. That's the impression I'm getting.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 21:40

Yeah, so I find the Gettysburg Address to be a difficult one, because it is a story. And so President Lincoln is in essence telling you for score and seven years ago, our forefathers, you know, he's he brings out this component where he's actually bringing you into a story. And so the auditory component here to learning the Gettysburg Address is a little bit more connected, it is using all of the components of the Journey method as the speech. So I'm not quite sure I would use that one as an example more. So I would, I would use some component, like if you wanted to remember the abstract of a research study where they're talking about the complexities of different connected molecules, that is boring as heck. And so that's where this model I think, really becomes useful. Because you can say, Okay, well, I don't know whether the, the, you know, co2 model molecule comes before, you know, the hydrogen molecule in this particular string of chemical reactions. And now you can say, Okay, well, for me, co2 is going to be you know, cohabitating lovers, right? So they are interlocked, in my mind, imagery wise, right. And so, you know, the images of someone having sex is going to stay in my mind, right, bingo. Now forevermore, I can say co2, is lovers having sex, right? A provocative construct in my mind's eye. And then I can say, well, the hydrogen atom is going to be a really lonely guy,

right, sitting in the middle of the room. And so now we have contrast. And we can see that now we have the lovers there. And then the lonely guy sitting in the middle of the room, now watching them, right. And now we have this like, Oh, is he a voyeur? That's creepy, right? And say this,

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Art Gelwicks 23:25

this is going down a strange path, right? No, but that's, that is what I will remember it. That's the funny thing is what you're describing, I will never get this out of my head.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 23:35

And that is the point. That is absolutely the point, the more absurd, or the more, you might think it's taboo. I don't particularly adhere to the puritanical American taboos. But the idea here is that the more shocking it is to the mind, the more likely it is that you'll remember it. Right. And at the end of the show, you will still remember CO<sub>2</sub> combined with those lovers interconnected, and that lone individual, that hydrogen atom, and that is the point right, you can now connect what would otherwise be mundane information, and now surface it to the level of being interesting information to you. Because you've associated that with imagery that is set into a location and you're in essence drawing a map, right? And so say, the Gettysburg address or that abstract in the scientific research study, you can, you can take that and place that on the map and move it around in a location that you're familiar with, that allows you to then be able to say, at any point in the story, you can step back to that location and know where the story continues. And so that's the point behind it, I think, is that when stuff is not capable of rising to the level of interesting, how do I how do I make it so so that I'm able to recall it in a way that is useful to me in my own my own life? So I'm

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Art Gelwicks 24:49

going to use I'm going to go through an experiment of doing this with one that I already know which is there's an acronym called Ada, awareness, interest, desire and action. It's from marketing. So if I apply this a approached to it, I can picture the young woman Ada, who goes into, let's say, a Spencer's Gifts and sees one of those lightning balls that they used to have where you would touch in the lightning would hit you sees that on the shelf, goes over to it and is fascinated with it, picks it up, starts to walk around the store with it, and then finally goes up to the counter to buy it to me that then says okay, she will, she became aware of the product, she developed an interest in it, watching it, she's developed a desire for it because she was carrying it around with her and finally took action and taking it to the register. That story, while not absurd allows me to walk through the narrative of what those four pieces are in. Yeah, I guess I could, yeah, that would work for me, because then even if I couldn't remember what I stood for, if I go through that story, I could then probably figure it out and recall it based on the construct of the story. Okay, I can see that one. But it needs

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Francis Wade 25:55

an outrageous element to be remembered, like folding solutions, right? Good do



Raymond Sidney-Smith 25:59

that. It depends on it depends on the association, right? So if the association is very strong and related, right, like if the relatedness is related. So for example, if I started tying molecular structures, again, I don't know why I'm thinking about chemistry today so much. But if I'm if I'm thinking about chemical molecules, and I can visualize those molecules in my mind's eye, because I've looked at lots of chemical structures, you know, under over time, then those two things are naturally related and may not need as much absurdity, you may not need the molecules to beat each other up, you know, but you could use that as like, you could set them as little GI Joes or as little army soldiers marching down the battlefield, and seeing, you know, multiples of one type of chemicals, set of chemical molecules marching toward the other. And when they clash, that creates the activation of the new bonds. These are the kinds of things that you can you can do in your your creation of your memory palace for that particular thing. And you can grade it up or down in terms of how outlandish you need it to be. The point is, is you pay attention to whether or not you remember it, if you don't remember it, then make the story crazier and crazier the story is, the more likely you are to remember it



Art Gelwicks 27:18

it sounds like this is this is really most effective initially on things that have a relationship but don't have a natural narrative to them. So thinking like, like I said, with ADA, I mean, they have the steps have relationship to each other. But there's no story built into that. I actually have a note, I'm going to try this experiment with the concept of logical fallacies and all the different logical fallacies that exist, I've always wanted to try and remember all of them and what the circumstances are that they would come up. And that's just been a train wreck. So I think this might be a good way to identify each of those fallacies and what their actual contextual references are, because there isn't a built in narrative to that where I'm struggling a little bit is, well, how do I remember the fallacies in the first place? How do I remember that list of them to then be able to dig into each one? And maybe that's a different visualization I have to come up with? Is this. Is this a very visual thing? I mean, Ray, when you picture this, do you actually mentally picture molecules and boxing gloves and things like that?



Raymond Sidney-Smith 28:17

Or just yeah, that's, that's the whole idea is that you're I'm, I'm recreating each of those data components, and tying them to a latticework in my mind. So for example, Benjamin Franklin developed what he called the 13 virtues, right in 1726. From temperance and silence, in order to chastity and humility, he had all of these various virtues, and in essence, you then need to be able to take okay, how do I associate temperance to the idea there? And of course, you know, the imagery that comes into my mind has always been an alcoholic, looking at a bottle of liquor and longing for that bottle of liquor. It's a it's a very shocking view to me to see someone who is kind of longing for it, but not taking it. Right. That's temperance. So for each of the 13 virtues, I'm able to create that imagery. And it's usually the most shocking, most to me novel thing that you could that comes to mind, when you think of that thing. Silence, I think of those hideous folk pictures of people with their lips sewn shut. Alright. And so silence becomes this imagery of a person with their lips sewn shut, I'm not going to forget that. And it might actually give me nightmares. But, but the idea is, is that now from temperance to silence, I now have

created an image to associate with each of them and you keep doing that in order for all the things that you want to memorize, right? They need to have components that structure them, and now you need to have them interact with each other in a space. So you've got to create the location, right? So you know, the associations. The associations are then what what is the association to the images, right, so what's the connectedness that you're going to create between those things, templates, and the image Have these people. So that's going to be the connection we write, right, we want to create those kinds of connections. And then we want to place them in a location. And I might put them all on a chessboard, and decide that each of the virtues of Benjamin Franklin are now players on the chessboard, temperance becomes the queen. So now I've connected that to something I already know, right? That's the association, the queen is now this person longing for a bottle of alcohol. And it's just sitting there on the throne, longing for the for the bottle of alcohol. And then the silence is the king, right? The King is got his lips sewn shut, and he's just trying to give orders but can't write all of this is now part of a story, right? Because now we can start to see this queen, maybe a maligning her kingdom. And the king is shackled by the fact that his queen has had his lip sewn shot, right, and then you just keep you just keep making the story, right now you keep rolling through that story. And over the course of you doing that, which again, like I'm doing this live with you, right, now, you're going to not be able to forget that once you've gone through that process. So it's not actually that much time, once you've done the memory palace design, now, it's just running yourself through the story to make sure that you actually remember it. And if it's not, if it's not surfacing, for recall purposes, then the story has to be amped up, right. So, you know, like, when you get to when you get to frugality, you know, is it that you know, the the concept of whatever, you know, one particular component, you know, dangling dollar bill over the other, you know, like, you know, like, okay, that might not be enough to get me to do that. So frugality might be someone trying to save someone from burning money, right. And so this person's diving on, on the money and someone's lighting them on fire, in order to be able to save the money, right, this kind of absurdity, nth degree to frugality, we're just going through these components, and as we build them, then the story becomes that much more. Not profound, but, you know, exciting to the mind. And that means you're going to remember it better. That's pretty much all it is,

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Art Gelwicks 32:03

I'm starting to discover your mind palaces much more like House on Haunted Hill was a scary place.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 32:10

I don't watch, I don't watch scary films, I

A

Art Gelwicks 32:14

don't hear a lot of rainbows and unicorns.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 32:18

Those are those are not things that are shocking. I mean, you can have shocking things that

those are those are not things that are shocking, I mean, you can have shocking things that are that are both pleasurable, and also dangerous and scary, I tend to find that I will, being the you know, kind of high anxiety person that I am, you know, it's just natural for me to, to use those functions to greater effect for myself, and but everybody's going to naturally go to their, to the place where they have their strengths. And that's also a good component about the memory palace. You know, when you're when you're thinking about the method of loci, think of locations that are that are really fungible, that you can place around your mind and utilize very quickly and readily. You don't want to say like, Okay, I'm going to use a druid temple in in Ireland, you know, that you heard about once upon a time, you know, like, you need to pick your living room, because you know, its layout, you know everything about it, I usually say if you were to go blind, would you still be able to recall in your mind's eye, that location, if you are, then it's a great place for the memory palace, because you're going to be able to summon that very easily. And you're going to know where every piece is, I grew up playing chess with my brother, I would say I grew up losing to chess with my older brother. And so I know the chessboard very well, I know the layout, and I can place things with those characters very easily. And so I end up using that as a mechanism for a lot of my memory palace choices, you want to tie these things, you want to associate them to things that you already have in your in your mind, and then use those as locations. Now note the chessboard is not a physical location. It's not it's an abstraction, right? It's not a physical location, necessarily. But because I can place that on a table on my desk and visualize it, that's helpful to me. And so everyone's kind of choices are going to be a little bit different. I think physical spaces are usually good. A home, especially a home that you've lived in for many years is actually really good way to do a lot of your memory palace thing, you could probably do all of it for your entire life, just inside of a home. Because you have different rooms, you have different surfaces in those rooms. And you can create those pieces in those in those spaces.

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Francis Wade 34:17

I would I would actually if I had to memorize the 13 virtues were there. Yeah, I probably put them to song that's probably what I don't think that's I think that's probably a different technique.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 34:26

But it's the same technique. Yeah, it's

F

Francis Wade 34:28

the same on it's just a different kind of not a physical space but the audible space.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 34:32

No, you're you're creating a story. Right? All Songs are stories, you're communicating a story to someone. So if you were communicating a story to someone, then you are associating those components of you know that you're creating in the story. You just want to be able to describe what you're trying to explain to people in that story.

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Francis Wade 34:52

Your first gig out the door Remi song? Yeah. So before I learned any music, musical notes, and I know very little but I did learn him at some point. You know, though there a female there, you know that that was my first exposure to musical notes. And of course, you know what I can't forget that for I'll never forget that. But I learned it so long, so young. So I can see that it has the same kind of effect, you're you're telling, you're telling a story that has markers and the more vividly more vividly you can construct a story, the easier it is to recall it. And then you practice it a few times, and voila, there you are, it's always may always be a part of what you remember, I can see the common construct,



Raymond Sidney-Smith 35:34

right. And I think that's a little slightly different of a mnemonic only because dough and deer is about the the likeness and sound. And so you're you're learning you're learning sound Association. And so that's a little bit different, there isn't actually a story, right when you're thinking about the various components, but you can relate it to things like many people think of that song, and they immediately summon the sound of music. And so they're gonna, they're gonna have, you know, a connection to Julie Andrews and her singing and those kinds of things. So there's lots of association with that song. Plus, if you learned at a young age, it's it's something that may be kind of foundational to your to your remembrance of your upbringing. So there is a tie there, what you were talking about was, if you wanted to learn the 13 virtues, and turn them into a song, you'd have to start from scratch, to be able to remember them. And by taking Association, which you already know, right, which could be family members, it could be chessboard pieces, it could be any number of things, right, you know, you decide on what you want to associate each of those 13 items with, and then tying them to imagery of those things, which is usually fairly closely related, right? If you think, oh, you know, this person is my family member, then you're going to see the family members face.

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Francis Wade 36:49

I'm trying to divorce the imagery completely and say that there's ways to remember just from the just from the music alone, so if we had a temporal song, you know, I mean, a virtue song, it could be temperance means stay away, don't drink or the others again, integrity, whatever it is that you



Raymond Sidney-Smith 37:05

you. I wasn't I will say them for anybody who is who's interested. The 13 virtues are temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, and humility, the idea of memorizing those and knowing them from heart, you know, by heart is a factor that you could set to song very easily so that, you know, there was a, I think, was Animaniacs, back in the day they did these countries of the world, and states, states, you know, in their capitals. Obviously, song is a very powerful mechanism for being able to use story in a particular way. But also, there are just other components there. I think the sound quality is a little bit different here. And I think you probably

could use sound as an associative quality within the method of loci. But I think we're talking about two different mnemonic structures here. Yeah, those those I think are two different things. Not to say that you can't use them in combination, I say, Do what works. I've just, I do not use sound generally in my own, you know, development of memory palaces, but I could it sounds to me like Francis, that's something that you should definitely think about when it when you think about how to how to create these structures. Yeah. What's

A

Art Gelwicks 38:21

fascinating me about this, and I'm going back to the 13 virtues. But I'm also going back to the logical fallacies is not so much the fact of being able to recall it within sequence, but to be able to recall things out of C. So for example, we're talking about the 13 virtues. And for some reason, I have this mental image of a merry go round. And each of the virtues is someone riding on one of the horses on the merry go round. But to be able to spin that to get to whichever virtue I need to think about at that point, without having to go through that whole narrative sequence to me is pretty compelling. Because when I think about something like Aida, often it's rare that I need to recite what Aida is more often than not, I need to be able to pull a particular part out of it and explain that component, you know, the transition from interest to desire that type of a piece of it and I need to recall those relationships so being able to recall those as individual departs on demand, but as they're related as a whole is really compelling. It's something just struck me about what you were talking about there as you said, As you build your memory palace, and I think that's the part that overwhelms me a little bit and we haven't mentioned it here but I mentioned it in the pre show. I only equate this to like Sherlock I mean you watch the the Sherlock show and he's got this massive memory palace and everything he's ever seen is stored in there. And granted I'm no Benedict Cumberbatch. I don't have that recall level up there. But this is a it sounds like this is a slow progressive build. You just start adding things into it. You don't have this massive house and start to fill it up. It's little bits at a time and I'm looking at all the little post it notes that are on my desk at around that have things that I need to recall. But no Not all the time. So it's it's definitely an interesting experiment, I'm cautiously optimistic of trying.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 40:06

And some people use the calendar format as a mechanism for remembering things. There are people who use all kinds of different spaces, whether they be abstractions or real spaces for being able to do this as well. And so it just ends up being what do you want to be able to recall, and you talk about the idea of being able to recall information out of sequence, that is very much the idea behind having a good story. Because if you have a good story, then you know, the points in the story, right, most stories have, you know, kind of some introduction, right, some some kind of exposition, rising action, there's a climax, and then there's some kind of, you know, declining action or declining components and then resolution some denouement to the to the whole story. So if you're following that kind of general model of good story, then you're capable of also manifesting these memories to know where the various data point is that you want to surface. And so if I'm thinking, Okay, well, what comes before sincerity, but after frugality, I'm going to know that that's industry based on my own memory palace, because I can see it in the story, I know what's happening, as it's related to those those components, if that makes sense. So you don't need to, you don't need to recall the rest of the story, you need to hone in on the map component and just surface that piece. And that's going to trigger all of

the other associated memories. So something that we haven't talked about yet, which is the fact that you can have palaces within palaces. So at some point, you create this base level Foundation, which is first just tying data points to associations. So how do you how do you manifest those kinds of things? Right, so let's go back, can you remember what co2 is from earlier in the show, I imagine you still can recall now what co2 is now, and then we have that lone hydrogen atom because of that. Now, going forward into the future, you can now always summon that image to co2, which now means that all of the other memory palaces you build upon have a foundation of all an image that is, that is provocative enough, shocking enough for you to remember always, that then helps you build on top of that. So yes, the first time you want to remember something is a bit of heavy lifting, but it's not that much heavy lifting. Because you know, you're you're thinking about only the components you need to remember and you're creating them when you need to then from that point, you build on top of it, and you build on top of it, and you build on top of it, and dissimilar to a house of cards, your memories not going to fail you once you have those ties together, they will be they will as you as you build more on top of them, it actually solidifies it strengthens it tempers the memory, right, because each time you use another memory palace on top of another memory palace, you are actually creating a stronger foundation. It's the it's kind of the opposite. Or some people think, oh, yeah, well, if I keep doing these things up, I won't remember this stuff on the bottom. But the reality is that the stuff on the bottom actually get becomes more concentrated and stronger in the mind, by virtue of that. So then I can go to this point in the lower part of the foundation, and that will automatically be able to tie me to any of the other memory palace components higher up on on the pyramid, so to speak.

A

Art Gelwicks 43:13

If nothing else, I've learned how creepy hydrogen actually is.

F

Francis Wade 43:16

He's made that clear.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 43:20

works, it works, right like

A

Art Gelwicks 43:21

I totally get I feel bad for hydrogen.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 43:25

I don't know what he did in his life.

A

Art Gelwicks 43:28



AL GELWICKS 43:20

To be as hard as the third wheel.



Francis Wade 43:30

Yeah, thing I'm seeing that that there's there's a commonality between the mechanisms that you are constructing in that there is a natural flow to them in a way that there is a natural flow to a poem, not natural, there's a constructed flow, a poem that, that that young lady gave at the inaugural this week. So there's a you know, each each stanza comes before the other is a sequence that she's following. And if you were to, you could construct that as a visual memory palace, you could put it the song, you could recite it out several times to yourself until you memorize it. But the point is that the structure that's holding it together is something that has a set beginning and an order in between. So you're looking to attach the thing you're trying to remember to something, some vehicle that has a beginning and an end and the same sequence in between. And that could be stories, whatever, whatever it might be, whatever it is, if you do that effectively, then it'll help you to it'll help to provoke the memory of the items that need to be remembered along the way. It seems like it's the it's the beginning the thing the thing has to have a beginning and an end and a sequence in between and that as long as you can make that catchy you know, then whatever you're attached to it, then you're likely to remember that seems to be the commonality I'm wondering



Raymond Sidney-Smith 44:46

in bringing ourselves to the to the close the conversation, what are things that you feel like listeners could use out of what we just discussed? What are kind of the practical applications of either the memory palace with a method of love Chi Journey method, Mind Palace, whatever they you want to call it, and or other mnemonics and how these mnemonics could potentially be utilized in their productive worlds,



Francis Wade 45:11

I think it's those moments because I have a strong idea that someone should not use memory for that. And that kind of carries over to the idea that they shouldn't use memory for things that they don't have to remember. But for so those things they have to remember. So for example, when I go on a bike ride, I have to remember the rule. And the way to do that is, for example, to figure out the route beforehand, and then visualize the turning point, the places where you have to make a decision. So that's similar to if you can visualize them and picture them. That's similar to creating a memory palace, but it's more of a memory terrain, so that you know that this left turn comes first, that right turn comes second, but you actually actually do this, actually do this, take my mind through the journey in my from start to finish before I go so that I can remember it. So there's those moments where when I'm on a bicycle, I can readily pull out my smartphone and then check Google Maps while I'm moving, it's inconvenient or in a car, if I don't have GPS going. But there's those moments when we we don't have a way to rely on technology, or even paper or somebody else where we have to do our own remembering an exam. For example, I think it's those moments when we cannot use a device to help us. And we must use rely on our own senses that what we've come up with is kind of a common way to assemble, remembering the act of remembering, I think

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Art Gelwicks 46:32

this is one of those key things that you have to start small I'm and I'll use myself in the context, I have a lot of just reference terminology that I constantly go back and look up in Google. And I've always used the excuse, well, I can just google it. But there are things that I want to start to be able to recall on demand that those are the things that are personally important to me, that I think will motivate me more to use this type of technique. So that's what I would suggest is find things that you have a personal connection to, rather than having to go down the professional path first. I mean, if you're trying to memorize the tenants of the agile project management methodology, okay, maybe are really personally bought into. But I would say that there's probably something that you have a deeper relationship to, from a desire standpoint that you can use to see if you can make this work for yourself and start to look at the technique. But the only other thing I would suggest is don't get frustrated. I mean, this, to me sounds like a hard thing to do to get started, it sounds like something will get easier with time. But that initial get the ball rolling sounds like there's some effort involved. So I would say just be patient with yourself.



Raymond Sidney-Smith 47:34

And I always find that it's really interesting, because the productive gains of not being able to Google, every little thing that you want to be able to recall becomes that much faster, you can get other things done. And so that's where I found it to be quite useful. If I search for something multiple times a day, then it's really important for me to be able to remember those things myself, for example, converting between the metric and imperial system, I just have found that if I just memorize certain points, as opposed to trying to do the math in my head, just remember, just memorizing the conversions that are useful for me has been far faster than me going into Google, or whatever other conversion tool and converting those components. So that has been very, very helpful. Also foreign currencies, you know, how much is a is the dollar worth versus the, you know, current Yuan, those are things that you're going to need Google for because they fluctuate, but you know, Celsius to Fahrenheit, they're not going to change, the conversion is always going to be the same. So if you can just memorize the anchor points, you know, like, if it's a 75 degree day out today, then knowing the conversion in Celsius is just helpful for my mind to be able to recall that quickly and know generally, what temperature it is outside based on those anchor points. So that ends up being something that I don't have to waste time on going somewhere else to find because I all men automatically know that. And so those are the kinds of things that I think about winning when it comes to that. Now, I'll I'll probably disagree with you in the sense that I actually lean heavily on this in a professional environment first, and usually recommend to people because it's a clear value add to their work day, if you can, if you can increase your motivation to be able to create the association imagery, location and story associated with anything, then you're going to be able to see its profound effect. And I know I've I've been benefited by this so much in my my life and career to date. And I just hope everybody else gets some benefit out of it as well in the sense that like for professional licenses, or professional certifications, I remember when I was taking one of my first license exams, and I was just not interested in memorizing those components. By doing this memory palace, I was actually able to sit down and say, Okay, I'm going to pass this exam and the way I'm going to pass this exam is just creating a foundation, which will be a really great memory palace. And once I did it, it was just So easy. And I had my business partner actually, at the time, who was taking the same exam. And I'm typically a good tester, like I'm a

traditionally good good tester, but I, you know, knocked it out of the park. And I was really pleased by seeing the fact that this was something that otherwise would have been onerous, maybe I would have just barely passed the exam if I hadn't done the work to be able to make this memory palace. And by doing so, it just made it a simple a trivial project for me. And I was able to pass the test and move on to the next level. And it turns out that to this day, there are certain things that I can still recall, because I created that memory palace. And mind you, I did not create the memory palace for any long term memory at all. But, you know, if you ask me about certain components of that license, I can, I can still recall them, they're just there. And that that imagery is still associated with them. So you can have some really long term positive benefits by virtue of creating these that could be useful now decades, you know, many decades later, for me, so I just I think this is all really quite useful stuff for for folks who are interested. We have reached the end of our discussion today. But the conversation doesn't stop here. We couldn't have possibly talked about all things related to memory palace method of loci Journey method, Mind Palace, and or mnemonics so if you have a thought, a question or a comment about what we've discussed today, please visit our episode page on productivity cast dotnet there on the podcast website at the bottom of each episode page, you can leave a comment or question and we can read and respond to those there by the way to get to any productivity cast episode quickly, you just simply use the three digit episode number two, and just add that to the end of productivity cast dotnet forward slash and you will then go go to that page. If you have a topic about personal productivity you'd like us to discuss on a future cast please visit productivity cast dotnet forward slash contact. If you have a desire to subscribe to the podcast, you're not subscribing go to productivity cast dotnet forward slash subscribe. And finally, I want to express my thanks to Augusto Pinaud Francis Wade, and art Gelwicks for joining me here on this and every productivity cast weekly. You can learn more about them and their work by visiting ProductivityCast dotnet as well there on the about page, you can learn all about them find their links, all that fun stuff. I'm Ray Sidney-Smith on behalf of all of us here at ProductivityCast Here's to your productive life.



#### Voiceover Artist 52:31

That's it for this productivity cast, the weekly show about all things productivity with your hosts, Ray Sidney-Smith and Gousto pinout with Francis Wade and art Gelwicks