



How to be a Mental Athlete and Remember Everything

I recently started reading *Moon Walking with Einstein*, where Joshua Foer dives into the learning intricacies of the top professional memorizers in the world. The opening chapter begins with the author, formerly a journalist, competing at the US Memory Championships Finals, but quickly flashes back to the chance meeting of a memory grand master named Ed Cooke. This encounter lit the spark of a burning obsession to learn the secrets of mental athletes like Ed Cooke. To his befuddlement, his new friend implored that he was just an average person, and that anyone could compete at his level if they trained an hour a day for 6 months. Ed then challenged him to undertaking memory training, promising that he would make it to the Memory Championship Finals in a mere 8 months. The first course of action was to determined Joshua's baseline intelligence, and after two weeks of grueling testing, he was found to be painfully average. Interestingly, Ed Cooke and his fellow competitors were also found to be of average intelligence. However, fMRI imaging results demonstrated that they used very different regions of their brain whenever they were learning new information. At this point, Ed Cooke begins to divulge his secrets, revealing how anything can be made unforgettable through creating ludicrous mind palaces full of visual cues, that can be returned to at any moment for retrieval. It turns out that the brain is exceptionally good at remembering visual imagery, even if we might not notice it. However, training yourself to utilize visual learning pathways can be significantly more

efficient way to learn that promotes both retrieval and retention. The author begins to practice these techniques, surprising himself when he can learn immense lists and strings of numbers. While I have not finished reading the book, many of us have already experienced the efficacy of visual imagery in learning with the sketchy and pixarize videos. I believe that it is possible to take things a step further, and take more ownership of this technique by creating mental palaces filled with our own visual cue creations that could greatly increase our learning and retention, ultimately making us more knowledgeable clinicians.