

The Forgotten Jump:
a day in the life of an Equestrian Amnesiac

If you ever have the chance to accidentally-on-purpose lose your memory for a day or so, I highly recommend doing so. Keep in mind you may or may not develop a concussion along the way, but that's besides the point.

I would love to start this off with an epic description of how I fell off my horse and hit my head, but unfortunately for us, I can't. That part of memory is permanently erased. Honestly, that's kind of a bummer for me, because I can't really 'learn from my mistakes' if I don't remember them, but on the other hand, I don't have to worry about being traumatized by it. There's always a silver lining, I guess.

In terms of me actually losing my memory, I'd always assumed that people had to pass out. In all the books and movies, whoever is on the road to becoming the amnesiac of the plotline usually suffers some sort of epic fall, bangs their head, experiences an explosion of pain, and then faints, before waking up as a totally different person who doesn't know their own name. Luckily (or unluckily, depending how much you like a good story), I only suffered the 'epic fall' part of becoming a temporary amnesiac. At least, I like to believe it was an epic fall. Since that part of my memory is blank, I'm going to assume that something terrifying happened, and that I barely escaped with my life. It's possible that I simply slipped off, but again, that wouldn't be a very entertaining story.

Anyways, I digress; my friends have asked me what it was like to actually lose my memory, and I'm not really sure how to describe it. It's as if my brain did a jump cut to the wrong place, and left all its other memories behind in its rush, like a cool YouTube video with a shit buffering system. Actually, here's a better analogy; imagine a waiter carrying a tray filled with tiny, complex, bite-sized appetizers at a ridiculously fancy party, and said waiter trips and drops the tray, causing the food to go flying everywhere. The tray doesn't break, and the food isn't ruined, but the food is no longer on the tray. That's the best rough description I can manage. If my brain was that tray, the horse the waiter, and my memories the food, then all the memories had fallen off my brain while I fell off the horse. They weren't messed up or anything, they were just not present at that moment (like my memory during a math test).

I do, however, remember my initial thought processes. My first thought upon losing my memory was something along the lines of, 'God, why is it so bright outside?' I guess I had completely forgotten that I was in the middle of an equestrian competition on the blazing Florida sun (you know, important details). I just knew that it was hot, bright, and that I was very sweaty. It was when I lifted a gloved hand to wipe the sweat from my face that I first realized something was off. First of all, I had *gloves* on my *hands*. I mean, let's be real, unless it's the winter, nobody wears gloves ever. Honestly, I think that's kind of sad, because opera gloves look amazing, but anyways; I sat up, looking down at my gloved hands intently, before realizing that I wasn't only wearing gloves- I was wearing a full freaking suit. Blazer and leather boots and all. I looked up, and I wasn't in a comfy bed, but I was in the middle of a dirt field, with a large, darkly colored horse sauntering away from me, and several people yelling at me not to move. Still somewhat dazed, I figured maybe I really *had* just woken up then (which would be weird, since I definitely did not remember ever 'waking up'), and if that was the case, then it would make

sense for me not to remember the last hour, but presumably there must've been a yesterday that I could remember. But when I tried to recall the days before, I came up completely blank. Hell, forget about a yesterday, I couldn't even really remember the entire past year. It was if everything before my current situation was either nonexistent or a very vague, blurry dream.

It's around this time when the panic started setting in. Maybe I'd gotten kidnapped. Maybe I'd been transported into some crazy virtual reality where I didn't remember anything beforehand. 'What on earth- oh. *Oh.*' My mind clicked. Obviously, if everyone else on the sidelines shouting jumbled instructions at me knew what the heck was going on, but I didn't, I must've forgotten something by doing something, like falling off or having a heat stroke or something. For some bizarre reason, this epiphany that something must've caused me to forget everything something instantly relieved my anxiety. Looking back, I suppose it should've probably increased my anxiety, but at the time, I figured it was better than the possibility of having been kidnapped.

After this realization, I took a moment to try and exactly recall what had happened, but as I expected, nothing. 'Oh god,' I thought to myself. 'I hope I don't turn into one of those amnesiacs you see on television who has to relearn English. That would be so annoying. But I am *thinking* in English, so I definitely remember that.' I smiled to myself, relieved that I wouldn't have to go through the trouble of relearning a language, since I did remember sucking at learning Korean and French. 'Okay then, I have that down. What's next- oh, my name.' I sat in another moment of thought. 'I wonder if I can make up a name for myself in the case that I can't remember my usual one. But wait- Elizabeth. Elizabeth that's my name. Okay great, I remember my name.' The way these memories resurfaced wasn't any sort of 'aha' moment, but more like reflex memories. You know the way you can't remember your phone passcode by reciting it, but if I handed you your phone, you'd probably be able to punch it in purely by muscle memory? Yeah, it's like that- through internal monologue, basic facts came up in my own inner dialogue.

In that moment, a petite woman on the sidelines shouted my name, and I looked her way. 'Well, she called me Elizabeth, and she looks like she knows who I am, so I guess I was correct.' I figured that if she was calling me, she probably wanted me to go to her, and since (as previously stated) she looked like she knew what the hell was happening, and I definitely did *not* know what was happening, I decided to be civil and listen to her. I took a moment to try and stand up, but stumbled back onto my knees on the ground. It was at that moment that I came to the realization that not only did my head *really hurt*, but I was also seeing stars. I blinked hard, before taking a steadying breath and trying to rise to my feet again, thinking to myself, 'Ok, so I hit something, probably the ground.' Luckily for me, this attempt at standing was actually successful. As I started walking to the exit of the arena, though, I realized that I had to focus weirdly hard to keep my feet from leading me into a zigzag. 'So this is what taking a drunk field test feels like,' I thought contemplatively. As I reached the fence, the petite woman looked at me concern, and I immediately thought to myself, 'Okay, don't let her know you've lost your memory- she looks worried enough.' I quickly sat down on the fence's ledge, trying to disguise my lack of coordination and the fact that the ground was seemingly swaying under me.

“Are you okay?” the woman asked, patting down my shoulders and brushing dirt off my helmet.

I looked at her for a moment, before replying with unusual enthusiasm, overcompensating for my obvious cluelessness. “Yeah! Uh, I’m fine... Ellen!” Her name sprung into my mind, and I grinned widely in relief.

“Are you sure?” she asked skeptically.

Realizing how out of place my smile was, I quickly coughed, wiping it from my face and trying to frown. ‘Damnit,’ I thought. ‘What faces do hurt people usually make anyways?’ “Yep, yep. I’m good. Did I fall off, or something?”

Ellen stared at me. “Yes, you did fall off. Do you not remember?”

“No! No, yeah, I remember falling off, totally.” Looking over her shoulder at the horse behind her, the one I guessed I fell off of, I hunted for its name in my head. “Is... Fraaankie okay?” I asked her, drawing out the ‘a’ as I tried to remember if the horse’s name was Frankie or Franklin.

Ellen gave me a strange look, before waving my question off. “Yes, Frankie’s fine. He’ll take him back to the barn,” she reassured me, looking towards the teenage boy who was leading the horse away.

In a totally out-of-place moment, I thought to myself, ‘Hm. That guy is cute.’ It only took a second, though, before I balked at the idea. ‘*Charlie?* Did I just call Charlie cute? Nope, nope, nope.’ I cringed internally, before tuning back into Ellen, who was saying something about taking me to the emergency room. “Yeah, are my parents-” I cut my question short. My parents weren’t there with me, I knew that with certainty, but I couldn’t seem to remember *where* they were. “Are they in Korea?” I asked tentatively, testing my memory.

“Um, yes. Your parents are in Korea, at least that’s what you told me yesterday.” Ellen seemed puzzled by my random question, but I smiled faintly, happy my memory was starting to fall back into place.

“Good. That’s good.” I said out loud.

“Good? What do you mean?”

Before my dazed mind was forced to come up with an excuse for that, though, Ellen seemed to rethink her question, because she barreled forward without waiting for my answer. “Never mind, let’s get you to the hospital.”

I followed her out of the competition area into the parking lot, my steps careful as I tried to avoid hitting golf carts and the numerous barn dogs with my questionable orientation. To the innocent bystander, I must’ve appeared to be some irresponsible teen who drank way too much of whatever booze her older cousin gave her that morning, what with my unbalanced steps and cheery expression, but I assure you, I wasn’t. Not only because I don’t drink, but also because who gets drunk at 10 in the morning?

As I slid into the car seat, I could physically feel my memories start to slip back into place. It wasn’t sudden, though, and the memories weren’t particularly useful to my given situation. They were random things, like the fact that when I was eight I went to Africa, and that I once punched my brother so hard he started to bleed. The most important memory to me at that moment, though, was the recollection that I kept a diary. No matter how much of my life I was

starting to remember, there were still some gaps, and the last 48 hours were totally not there. I figured that I probably would have written all those things down, though. “Uh, Ellen?” I said tentatively. “Could we stop by my house for a quick second? Uh, I mean, *your* house? The house? I need to grab something in my room” I cringed internally at my jumbled question, but besides a quizzical face, Ellen shrugged.

“Yeah, sure. I need to grab my wallet anyway.” In retrospect, it was kind of weird that she *didn't* have her wallet on her, seeing as she had her whole purse over her shoulder, but again-broken memory, remember?

We pulled up in the driveway a moment later, and with intense concentration put into not faceplanting onto the ground, I made my wobbly way to the door of the house. Ellen stopped next to me. “What are you waiting for? Go to your room and grab your thing.” She smiled at me, before motioning towards where I presumed my room was.

“I was just holding the door,” I lied, before thanking my stars that she told me where my room was, and doing as best a run as I could into it, closing the door behind me.

The first thing I did was sit down on the end of the bed, taking a few deep breaths to steady myself (apparently that yoga advice isn't completely fake). But once I got myself to a state of not being as unbalanced as I was, and was actually able to look around the room, I experienced the strangest moment of *déjà vu*. Like, think of it this way- imagine if you walked into a room of a movie you knew very well, but haven't watched in a really long time. Like, say, you walked into Spongebob's pineapple (assuming you've watched that show before), but Spongebob wasn't there. You might sort-of recognize some of his stuff from previous episodes, but not everything would be completely familiar. That's the best way I can describe what it felt like. But as I looked at different aspects of the space, I felt certain that it must've been *my* room. The bed was unmade, some of the drawers were open, and there was a suitcase against the wall filled with laundry and a few bags of potato chips; all things I could definitely imagine a past me doing. I just couldn't recall doing any of it. Noticing my diary sitting on the top of the nightstand, I reached forward and grabbed it, before flipping to the page that was last night.

Reading it, though, was even stranger to me, for two reasons. The first one was obvious- reading about past events that I were only partially beginning to remember was a little mind-bending (like how I feel during the multiple-choice segment of my math test). The second reason was that, because I still didn't really remember writing all of what was written, it almost felt like I was reading the diary of someone else who was *exactly* like me. Which makes sense, since said person was actually just me, but was also really weird. You see, I'd always figured that somebody's memories and experiences were, you know, a vital part of who they were, and that without them they would be fundamentally different. And that makes sense, but it was also wrong. Because I didn't feel any different then, when I'd remembered a lot of my past, than how I did before, when I straight up didn't remember anything at all. Now, it's not as if today I think memories are useless, because they're obviously not (what's the point of doing anything if you can't remember it?). But I do think people shouldn't take events in life so seriously anymore,

because you're still the same person no matter whatever external events happen to you. Which is a pretty comforting thought, I think.

What? You think that's the life-changing reason for why I recommend losing your memory for a bit? Of course not. The reason why I recommend it is because now you have the perfect excuse for failing your next assignment (like how I did on my following math test).

Also, when I went to the hospital, they told me that I actually didn't have a concussion, I just had 'mild head trauma'. Whatever that is.

-Elizabeth Chung