



The Brain and Memory of Trauma

We have two types of memory. The memory that is clear and concrete (e.g. She wore a red dress). This sort of memory is stored in the *Cerebral Cortex*.

The other sort of memory is all of the things we do without “thinking about it” (e.g. heart rate, and emotions). These memories are in the lower brain.

When an experience happens to us, the information is taken in through the *Thalamus*. The thalamus sends the information to the amygdala and the hippocampus.

If it was a comfortable experience, the *Hippocampus* sends the information to the cerebral cortex. The information is then stored in the long term memory. We can remember the experience easily.

If it was a traumatic experience, the *Amygdala* gets excited. If this happens your body can go into a “fight or flight” state. Information will not go to the cerebral cortex and so, the information is not completely stored in the long-term memory. We won’t remember the experience easily.

When we are in a “fight or flight” state:

- Digestion stops.
- Bowels and bladder want to empty.
- Your period, puberty, or growth can be interrupted.
- You cannot remember.
- You feel hot, you breathe fast and your heart races.
- If it happens a lot, you can feel nervous and jumpy a lot of the time.