



Activity 2 – False Memories

1. Ask a friend about the same age of yours to help you with this activity. Think about a recent event (a month ago at most) you experienced together (e.g., an exam, a concert, a birthday party...). Without talking to each other, write down as many things as you can remember about that event.

Have you both written down the same things? Have either of you written down something the other one cannot remember at all? About the things you have both written down, do they resemble the same? Finally, is there any contradictory information between both recalls?

2. Repeat this experience with older events: something from a year ago, 5 years ago, and 10 years ago. Do you find more differences with the older events? What do you think it may be due to?

Until the 1970's there was a huge body of research related to how we memorize and forget new information, however, little was known about the contents of our memories, and how accurate they are. At that time, Dr Elizabeth Loftus started another stunning research project. In a series of studies, she showed that the memories of eyewitnesses could be altered by supplying wrong information. This was called the misinformation effect.

Later on, in the mid 1990's, she made critical discovery: she found that it was possible to make research participants remember things that had never happened. That is, we can be imbued with false memories. Can you imagine how important this is for the testimony of eyewitness in court?

3. Watch this TED talk by Dr. Loftus, explaining her research about false memories. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PB2Oegl6wvI>