

She was my first love, my first 'real' girlfriend. I was with her for several years. As I reflect back on my first love, I struggle to recall more than 20 memories of her. Somehow it seems strange that a love so grand (at the time) should entail only 20 or so memories.

My Father, I lived with for close to 18 years. I knew him for at least 18 years more than that before he died. You would think that someone so central to my life would entail more than 20 memories. But he too only seems to live on in the form of a surprisingly few memories.

Everywhere I look in my life, even the people I considered to have loved "the most" seem to live on in my mind in form of a few scattered memories.

I suppose if I make an effort and do some memory association I can recall more, but just the fact that there are so few memories of important people to me, is surprising. It is not something I have particularly noticed until recently.

The converse is likely to be true. If these people live in my mind in the form of 20 or so memories, then likely that is how I live on in the minds of people that considered me to be important at one time.

When I think back on my memories of important people in my life, somehow it does not seem enough. The paucity and scarcity of those memories seem to be a mismatch for the impact certain people have had on my life.

Fortunately episodic memories are not the whole story!

Take for example my auntie who died a number of years ago. At the moment I can only recall two episodes of cooking with her. Yet the sense impression in my mind is that we cooked reasonably frequently together. Cooking for us was a connection point as I grew up. Even though my memories of cooking are sparse, the overall impression of cooking is plentiful.

Consider an ex-girlfriend of mine. I have but a meager few memories of her laughing. Yet I remember her as a funny girl who made me laugh a lot during our time together.

My cousin who I was close to as a child and spend a few summers together. I have only the vaguest of recollections of what he looked like. Only a few meager memories to remind me of him.

Another ex-girlfriend. I have but a few vivid memories of our sexual adventures together. Yet I look back on that relationship as a highly sexual one. In fact we must have had sex hundreds and hundreds of time, but only a few are retained in memory, even though I consider the sex between us to be enjoyable and of a very high quality.

The vast majority of our episodic memories are lost to us. Yet a part of them, in the form of overall impressions, lives on within us in our unconscious. These impressions help us form a coherent picture of our past and the people who have helped shaped us. The impressions are never 'picture perfect' but they are close us enough to help us communicate our own life experiences to ourselves.

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