

The Man with the 7 Second Memory

Fill in the gaps with the words from the box:

rebooted accomplished cotton on
debilitated contracted ravaged
preserved bout elapsed



Imagine waking up every day without remembering anything from your past and then immediately forgetting that you woke up at all. This life without memories is the reality for British musician Clive Wearing who suffers from one of the most severe cases of amnesia ever known.

Clive Wearing was born on 11 May 1938. He was an 1) _____ musician and professional tenor at the Westminster Cathedral. On 27 March 1985 he 2) _____ a virus that attacked his central nervous system resulting in a brain infection that 3) _____ his entire life. The rare neurological condition called herpes encephalitis 4) _____ Clive's hippocampus. This part of the brain is essential for recalling facts and remembering how, where, and when an event happened. As a consequence, he was left with both anterograde amnesia, the inability to make or keep memories, and retrograde amnesia, the loss of past memories. Most patients suffer one or the other, so it's notable that Clive suffered both.

Anterograde amnesia

The duration of Clive's short-term memory is anywhere between 7 seconds and 30 seconds. He can't remember what he was doing only a few minutes earlier nor recognize people he had just seen. By the time he gets to the end of a sentence, Clive may have already forgotten what he was talking about. It is impossible for him to watch a movie or read a book since he can't 5) _____ to what he reads. Because he has no memory of any previous events, Clive constantly thinks that he has just awoken from a coma. In a way, his consciousness is 6) _____ every 30 seconds. It restarts as soon as the time span of his short-term memory has 7) _____.

Retrograde amnesia

Due to his severe 8) _____ of retrograde amnesia Clive doesn't remember anything that has happened in his entire life. But he does know that certain events have occurred. He is aware, for example, that he has children, even though he doesn't remember their names or any other detail about them. He knows that he used to be a musician, yet he has no recollection of any part of his career. Clive also knows that he has a wife. In fact, his second wife Deborah is the only person he recognizes. Whenever Deborah enters the room, Clive greets her with great joy and affection. For him, each meeting with her is the first one.

Musical memory

Interestingly, Clive's musical memory has been perfectly 9) _____ even decades after the onset of his amnesia. That's why Clive is capable of reading music, playing complex piano and organ pieces, and even conducting a choir.

Clive Wearing is still alive and lives in a residential care facility. Recent reports show that he continues to improve. He renewed his vows with his wife in 2002, and his wife wrote a memoir about her experiences with him.