

Surface Level Forgetting

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Having headmates with different abilities and skill levels is... Something! It's wonderful to see how diverse we are but it's also a shock every time we notice it. We're pretty bad at internally categorising our differences, even if those differences are always pretty consistent. We constantly forget things about ourselves, but what's true about us deeper down stays the same. Which then leads to us rediscovering the same skills and traits multiple times over. It can be disorienting, but it's also validating at the same time.

A guy who shades our art really nicely every time he draws decided he wanted to front yesterday--His first front in a while. He wants to draw but is a little halfhearted about it, he's tired and anxious and is just drawing to decompress a bit, not to make it "good". He ends up lazily shading a picture he scribbled out the entirety of in an hour, and I sit there watching like. Holy shit this is *lazy shading* for you. This is you not giving a damn about what you produce. You're not trying. Oh man. This is why you're one of the guys who works on any commissions we get.

No matter how many times we have a moment like this, we have this same type of moment every week or so with someone else with some skill of theirs we forgot about. There's people in here that set things on fire every time they cook and there's people who just slap shit together no recipe no thinking and come out with something great. There's people who can't read 5 words on a screen without getting sidetracked and people who sit down and get through half a novel or more in one sitting. There's people who can barely get out of bed in the morning they're so sleepy and people who can barely sleep at all. There's people who can only hide in the corner at a party and people who can switch in and start chatting to random strangers. The list goes on and on.

These differences are so, so common, and affect so many parts of our life. And still somehow, we manage to have anxiety about "what if we're fake, what if we're pretending on accident?". We all feel so similar, until we start actually paying attention to and noticing the differences. After all, if your memories are a little disjointed, it's easy to feel like "me" and not have much of a frame of reference for who the others in your body are. If you only know what it feels like to be "me" and your memories of other people are foggy, how can you figure out what makes you so different from the other people sharing your body? What if there is no difference? And then you get those doubts creeping in.

For a while, we thought that we didn't really have much amnesia going on. We knew who our headmates were, we could talk to them, we could largely switch on command. So obviously, in our mind, we were a bunch of people who were all quite similar despite having different identities and pronouns and names. But that's only part of the experience. We don't always understand who our headmates are *beyond* their names, or what they *do* in life. We don't piece together that it's always the same guy who deep-cleans our room on a whim. We don't always see that our art gets really good whenever this one guy fronts. It gets blurred together past a point, and things that are actually patterns seem more like coincidences than anything concrete because we just don't remember things well enough. It leaves room for doubt about what our differences actually are.

There is amnesia there, but it's less full memory "blackouts" like we used to have when we were younger, and more emotional--more personal. We can remember some things about ourselves, but unless we keep track deliberately, knowing who we are as *people* and not identity labels is very, very hard!

I think this is why having outside perspectives and our own recordkeeping has been so helpful. We're able to have friends tell us differences they notice, and we're able to check our own records to see who we are and what our differences might be. I can look someone up and see that they hate orange juice (what the hell) or they hate noise (how can you enjoy silence??). A friend can point out that one of us stands a little different or always says "hello" instead of "hey". Someone can point out that the last 3 times we've turned our alarm off and went back to sleep it's been the same guy. Having outside opinions and our own information written down has been so, so helpful in actually getting a grip on really knowing how we work.

It's validating too, to have that proof that even when we don't know about or notice these differences, they're there. And they're consistent! We might struggle to feel real sometimes even though now we're almost 10 years into being knowingly plural, but even though we actively forget details, those details are the same. People have rediscovered that they hate certain foods time and time again because they forget they found out they hated it last time. People have learned that they're good at certain tasks over and over again. People have found their love for a genre of music or a videogame again each time they forget.

We've taken a long while to start noting things about ourselves down like this, though. For a long while we were just doing what we saw most folks in the plural community do—name, age, roles, gender, pronouns, source... That sort of thing. Basic information. Things that are easy to remember, but nothing much beyond labels. And of course, I'm sure a lot of people might have been writing more details in private journals and such—not every detail about your whole identity needs to be public after all. But we didn't see things like that being mentioned.

A while into using SimplyPlural, we started writing down more information about ourselves. Our likes, our dislikes, our individual special interests, who our closest friends are, random pieces of information about our mannerisms, what we want to achieve, our plans for the future, what we want to buy, anything we could think of as being tied to whoever was fronting at the time. Doing that has helped *so much* in being able to truly know ourselves and our differences. SimplyPlural has discontinued now, but we've moved a bulk of the information elsewhere. It's been so damn helpful to be able to keep track of this stuff, both for knowing ourselves *and* being able to remember our individual goals and make progress towards them.

It doesn't have to be pretty, or neat, or perfect, or public. I can't recommend some sort of journal, or file, or spreadsheet with details like that more. We've been so much more functional as a collective since we started being able to search for who's good at learning or who's good at sleeping or who's good at self care whenever we need to find a guy who can do those things. For systems with memory issues or just people who would find it easier to have a record, maybe something like that would at least be worth a try?

At the end of the day... Even when we don't remember ourselves or each other, we still stay us. We'll always have those doubts I think, that internal struggle of worrying about accidentally faking. But if we can actually *forget* information about ourselves and relearn it to be true later on, only then digging through chat or files or post histories and finding out we had this same idea months earlier... What other proof do we need? We might consciously forget things, forgetting who we are on the surface level, but that can't take our personhood or individuality away. Under all the forgetting and blurring and dissociation, we're consistently us.